

APRIL - MAY 2026

THE CHRISTIAN writer

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Book Reviews:

100 Years of Christian Camping
by Graham Ashby

London Longings by Leanne J Minton

The Great Exchange by Sally J Webb

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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Book Review Requests: (current members only)

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

286 Karapiro Road, RD 4, Cambridge 3496 or email: reviews@nzchristianwriters.org

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

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

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

www.nzchristianwriters.org

President's Report



We have here our April-May 2026 edition of *The Christian Writer*. I pray and trust you are enjoying the season you find yourself in. Writing is such a fascinating gift. Writing stories especially communicates character dynamics, ideas, nuance, the poetic and helps with world-building in people's minds. When we write, we offer something new to encourage and inspire others in their daily life. We will never know this side of eternity the power that our writing can have on an individual life. When we choose to publish our writing, in a book, collection, or magazine, we allow our writing to have greater reach and purpose than what we could achieve on our own. I believe writing is such an essential skill and here at NZ Christian Writers, we exist to help writers be encouraged, equipped and inspired to write for Him.

In Philippians 1:3-6 (NKJV), this scripture is a writing of thankfulness and prayer: *'I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.'* I believe when you write for Him, it is a good work that God has given to you. Together, with Jesus, you can complete the book that He has placed in your life to publish. May I encourage you to start that story, write that poem, or publish that book.

NZ Christian Writers is a ministry for writers who love Jesus. I'm excited to see what the Lord will do through NZ Christian Writers throughout 2026 and beyond. Our Christian faith and passion for writing is what unites us all at NZ Christian Writers.

I want to thank each of you for your generous support through your annual membership with us. When we have a critical mass of writers, it makes our collective a vibrant community.



Thank you to our wonderful magazine editor, Kathryn Paul, for another brilliant magazine for our members. Plus thank you to our member and photographer, Elaine Dixon, for sharing the photo featured on the front cover of this magazine.

May each of our members continue to be blessed for the season ahead.

Be blessed

Justin St Vincent

Editorial: Micro-decisions



Our life circumstances are often products of many micro-decisions. There are certain things that occur out of our control, but what we do with the life we've been given is up to us. For example, gaining weight happens over time and is usually a result of regular micro-decisions. Losing weight can be achieved the same way, through regular, consistent, micro-decisions. I am speaking from personal experience because I've managed to gain a lot of weight and lose a lot of weight, more than once. The key is to identify your habitual micro-decisions and then stick to the correct decisions and actions regularly for a long time.

Writing requires the same kind of self-discipline. Each day we will make micro-decisions about whether we will write or not. Have we pencilled it in as an important appointment? Have we given it priority over other things? Once we have started, can we keep up those regular micro-decisions to keep momentum, avoid distractions and stick at that specific project until it's finished? Are we celebrating the small achievements along the way?

For me, as a single person working full time, also serving in this voluntary role of magazine editor and caring for farm animals, I've struggled with prioritising my writing time. Years ago, I wrote my first children's novel but in recent years I have only managed short projects such as short stories and poetry. Anything that requires keeping momentum and not being disrupted over a long period of time, has not been completed. I would either be exhausted, or my routine would get disrupted and eventually I'd remember and think – *Oh, what happened?* I've felt frustrated because I often have many writing goals floating around in my mind, but my micro-decisions are not helping me achieve them.

**WHAT
HAPPENED?**



I must say “well done” to all of you who have managed to stick at and produce a long manuscript. A completed first draft is worth celebrating, even before you take the next steps toward publishing. Remember to tell us so we can include it on our celebration page in this magazine.

Each of our lives is unique and won't look the same as anyone else's. Therefore, we need to identify what our micro-decisions look like in our unique circumstances. That is an important step toward achieving a change in our lifestyle and reaching a writing goal. Can you identify what your micro-decisions have been that have created your current lifestyle? If not, I encourage you to give it some thought and pray about it. We mustn't be too hard on ourselves as we are all faced with various hurdles along the way. For me, it's still a work in progress to achieve lengthy writing projects. Let's keep at it because it's worth persevering.

With love in Jesus,

Kathryn Paul

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

Notices

Are you our next NZCW President?

NZ Christian Writers is seeking a current member who has been with us long term, for the voluntary president role. Email Justin at president@nzchristianwriters.org

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 May 2026. The deadline for *Young Christian Writer* is 10 June 2026.** Please send your contributions as a word document attachment, (maximum 500 words). Please send pictures as picture files, not pdf. Thank you, I'm looking forward to reading your work. Email to editor@nzchristianwriters.org.

Local Writers Group Leaders Needed – Let's Connect

Could you facilitate a Christian writers' group in your area? Get in touch to find out more: Email Justin at president@nzchristianwriters.org or Kathryn at editor@nzchristianwriters.org

Book Reviews Criteria – Send us Your Book

Members are welcome to request a book review of any of their published books. The main criterion is the book must 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.

Raising Godly Mothers Magazine

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

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 and click on the relevant magazine cover.

Honorary Members and Competition Graduates



There are two groups of people who NZ Christian Writers would like to acknowledge.

Honorary Members

We have a list of Honorary Members. These are people who have notably given of their time and effort to serve NZ Christian Writers, in a voluntary capacity for many years. Their names have been nominated and voted in, during past board meetings. We honour these people by including the list of their names on our website and by granting them free lifetime membership. The people on the Honorary Members list in alphabetical order are:

(The late) Beth Walker, Debbie McDermott, Fred Swallow, George Bryant, Jan Pendergrast, Janet Fleming, John Sturt, Julie Belding, Justin St. Vincent, Kathryn Paul and Keitha Smith.

Graduates List

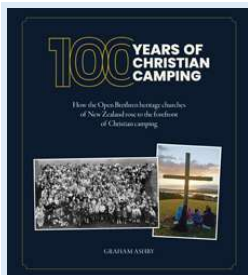
We also have a Graduates List. This used to be called an 'Honours List' but because of the name's similarity to the 'Honorary List' the NZCW board has recently decided to change the name to 'Graduates List'. These are current members who have worked their way through the competitions from Levels One to Three and have been placed in three competitions at Level Three. We honour the achievement by including their names on a 'Graduates List'. From now on, new graduates will receive a certificate. Graduates may continue to enter Level Three competitions. The people on the Graduates List are:

Carol Duffy	Julia Martin
Debbie McDermott	Julie Belding
Eion Field	Lesley Edgeler
Elaine Dixon	Lois Farrow
George Bryant	Pamela Lowrey
Jan Pendergrast	Patricia Kerr
Janet Fleming	Pauline Marshall
Janette Busch	Ruth Corbett
Jean Crane	Ruth Jamieson
Jean Shewan	Ruth Linton
John Lindsay	Sandy Miller
John Sturt	



Becoming a Judge

We prefer members to have fully graduated, or to have been placed in at least two of the Level 3 competitions in order to be asked to take on judging the competitions.



100 Years of Christian Camping

By Graham Ashby

Review by Julia Martin

Castle Publishing 2025

This superb book is the result of several years of painstaking research by Graham Ashby and others, about Christian camping in New Zealand associated with the Open Brethren during the past 100 years.

Each chapter is devoted to one of the 32 Christian camps or three hostels and gives the location and history, including key personnel from past and present, old and new photographs and recollections of campers associated with each property.

The stories recount the vision and sacrifice of the men and women who long ago saw the need to establish camps in their areas—in partnership with local churches—to convey the timeless and life-changing message of Jesus Christ to all ages.

Older readers will have pleasant memories reminiscing on the early days when camping conditions were rudimentary – straw palliasses for bedding, basic ablution facilities, dish washing in outside troughs, simple meals and volunteer staff.

The book also highlights the hostels in Auckland, Hamilton and Palmerston North which were established as safe places for young students to live and be sheltered from adverse worldly influences.

A few camps have closed or been sold, but the majority have survived and nowadays together accommodate approximately 400,000 campers annually.

The camps vary in size and sophistication from small local ones which remain basic and affordable, to the likes of Totara Springs in the Waikato which is the largest camping ministry of its kind in New Zealand.

With new legislation, health and safety regulations, full-time staff and modern facilities, costs have risen and it's a challenge to keep charges affordable while staying true to the original calling and purpose of the camps.

I believe this book will have wide appeal even for those who have had no association with these camps and hostels. Over the years, thousands of lives have been changed and this book celebrates that living legacy.



London Longings

By Leanne J Minton

Review by Julia Martin

Self-Published 2025

After enduring a bad marriage in New Zealand lasting ten years, Leanne makes a clean break and heads to London where she takes up teaching positions in some challenging schools in the city.

Her heartfelt desire is to meet a decent Christian man she can share her life with. As a Christian, she made a vow: 'I'll go anywhere, God – anywhere in the world if You'll find a man to truly treasure me.'

After several disappointing encounters with different kinds of men, she concludes that the chance of meeting a suitable one is a far-off dream.

Book Reviews

In the meantime, she makes good friends and enjoys the sights, culture, and history of London along with regular trips to places in Europe. In evocative and memorable detail, she brings to life the places she visits.

A series of coincidences which only God could orchestrate, leads her to Canada – a country she had no desire ever to visit.

There she meets Phil, an outdoor park warden in Jasper who at first holds no appeal to her. But after spending time together, a friendship develops which leads to romantic love and eventually marriage.

Leanne has dedicated her memoir to encourage 'all those grieving a severed relationship' to keep trusting God to give them the desire of their hearts according to His will.

She writes: 'My story is an example of how He can restore you and give you a hope and a future. He is the God of second chances.'

THE GREAT EXCHANGE



Pain to Promise.
Winning in the game of your L.I.F.E.
SALLY J. WEBB

The Great Exchange

By Sally J Webb

Review by Julia Martin

Published by Inspiring Perspectives 2024

Born into a dysfunctional family in Yorkshire, Sally had to learn to cope on her own with a deep sense of rejection, loneliness, and 'not being good enough'. With a strong character and positive attitude and work ethic, she overcame her past difficulties and problems and developed her L.I.F.E strategy (Love, Insight, Freedom, Engagement) which helped turn her upside-down world the right-way up.

Book Reviews

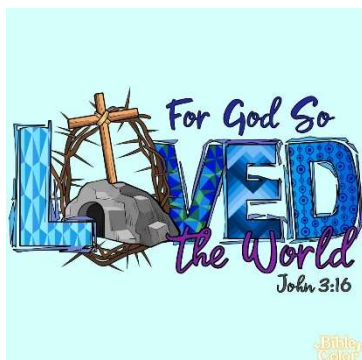
This resulted in the Great Exchange she describes in her book. In 2005, along with her husband and two children, the family settled in New Zealand and enjoyed the high life. But their frantically busy lifestyle couldn't last. Losing her father and suffering a bitter marriage breakdown, Sally hit rock bottom.

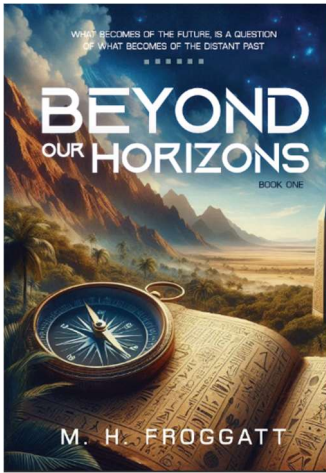
Now struggling to support her children on a meagre income, she had to start all over again.

From this dire state however, things changed. Drawing on the wisdom and philosophy of experts along with her new-found Christian faith in Jesus Christ, Sally made a new start which opened amazing opportunities and achievements. She went from victim to victor.

Sally now operates a successful life-coaching and mentoring business. Using her personal journey, her vision, strategies and faith-based approach, she helps people transform their lives from failure to success.

She writes: 'My prayer is that through this book, as I share my story and the lessons I have learnt, your heart and mind will come into alignment with what is noble, right and true for you. So you too will be released from your past and free to live your life by design, full of peace, love, joy, prosperity and abundance.'





Beyond Our Horizons: A Journey of Trust and God's Timing

by Matt Froggatt

When I first began writing my debut novel, *Beyond Our Horizons*, I assumed I'd self-publish. It seemed like the simplest way forward and I hadn't yet explored the wider landscape of publishing. What I had done, however, was commit the journey to the Lord and stay open to wherever He might lead.

As I approached the final chapter of my manuscript, something unexpected happened. One evening, just as I sat down to write, the words came clearly to mind: "Remember Ark House Press." It was vivid, unmistakably God and it brought back a memory I'd forgotten—an advertisement I'd heard on Life FM nearly two years earlier. At the time I'd thought *that could be an option someday*. Now the Lord was bringing it back with purpose.

I reached out to Ark House in Australia, introducing myself and the project. What immediately stood out was their heart for new authors and their global distribution reach. They asked for my first five chapters and a summary. Within days, a manuscript assessor had reviewed my work and I was speaking with one of their author managers about a co-publishing contract—and, naturally, a bit of New Zealand vs Australian rugby.

Signing with Ark House became a turning point. Their hybrid model offered the structure of traditional publishing with the creative involvement of an independent author. It streamlined the entire process, lifted a huge weight off my shoulders and brought clarity and confidence to a vision I had been pursuing somewhat blindly. It truly felt like God had ironed out the creases and breathed fresh energy into the project.

From there, the real work began. My manuscript sat at a massive 272,000 words and Ark House explained why it needed to be reduced to around 100–150,000 for marketing dynamics—especially for a brand-new, unknown author stepping into the retail landscape. They guided me through the expectations and publishing process, answering many questions along the way. They also took charge of cover design, typesetting, print preparation and global distribution.

One of their most valuable pieces of advice was to establish a strong social-media presence. As a new author, building momentum mattered. I began posting weekly: visuals, excerpts and scene-inspired graphics on Instagram and Facebook. The response was far beyond what I expected.

Meanwhile, I tackled the monumental task of cutting more than 120,000 words. I immersed myself in researching and learning everything I could about editing, proofreading and what separates successful manuscripts from unsuccessful ones. Several generous beta readers offered feedback that helped shape the final draft into something tighter, stronger and more compelling.

Throughout the entire process, prayer remained central. Every step—every cut, every rewrite, every moment of uncertainty—was carried by the assurance that God had placed this story on my heart for a reason.

Now *Beyond Our Horizons* is no longer just a manuscript. It's a testimony of trust, perseverance and God's perfect timing. I couldn't be happier with the outcome.

Visit: <https://www.arkhousepress.com/beyond-our-horizons/>

List of Christian Bookstores in NZ

Adventist Book Centre (Pakuranga and online)
Art in the Villa (Whangarei)
Bible Society NZ (online)
Children's Bible Ministries (Mt Eden and online)
Christian Resource Centre (Mt Roskill and online)
Christian Superstore NZ (Christchurch and online)
Christian Value Books (Christchurch and online)
Church Stores (Ellerslie and online)
Ecclesia Books (Christchurch and online)
Emanuel Books (Manukau)
Epic Books (Christchurch and online)
Evermore Books (Mt Roskill)
Gracebooks NZ (online)
Heartbeat Christian Store (Warkworth)
Living Word Bookcentre (online)
Manna Christian Stores (Eight stores and online)
Pleroma Christian Supplies (Hawkes Bay and online)
Pure Books (Timaru and online)
Sonshine Bookcentre (Tauranga and online)

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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

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Brian Cavit Dip Edit

E: cavitent@gmail.com

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)

Ph: 021 238 9234

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Having your manuscript professionally proofread is an essential part of the publishing process and a vital steppingstone of your writing journey. It's a worthwhile investment toward your book achieving positive results. I'm here to help.

My qualifications include a Diploma of The Writing School, Certificate of Professional Proofreading and Copy Editing, experience as a traditionally published author and as NZCW's voluntary magazine editor.

I offer my services via email or post for a reasonable fee. Please email me for information. I believe you can never have too many proofreaders. Let's jump on this steppingstone together.

Kathryn Paul

E: steppingstoneediting@gmail.com

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WRITING ANSWERS

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

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

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

Janette Busch

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or Janette.Busch@gmail.com



South Island Christian Book Authors Network February 2026 Gathering

by Verna McFelin

Celebrating Christian Writers in the South Island

On 21 February 2026, the South Island Christian Book Authors Network (SICBAN) welcomed 15 passionate writers, including five new faces, to a day of encouragement, fellowship and practical equipping. With 17 apologies, the gathering was intimate, engaging and full of shared testimonies that reminded us that no writer journeys alone.

We had the privilege of celebrating two newly published authors:

- **Leanne Minton** – *'London Longings'*, now available in local Christian bookshops.

After her abusive husband deserts her, twice, Leanne leaves New Zealand for London. Determined to rebuild her life, she pours herself into teaching and travel while quietly grieving the fading hope of remarriage. When online dating offers one last chance, a surprising reply seems to fulfil God's part of the bargain, but will she honour her vow when love finally calls her to respond?

- **Tiaki Leathers** – *'The Treaty of Waitangi: Covenants and Consequences. The Untold Story of Māori Spiritual Subservience to the Crown'*. Around the time of the Treaty of Waitangi, Māori culture was judged through religious laws which failed to reflect the finished work of Jesus Christ. This book reveals how spiritual systems of control – not people or governments, became barriers to grace, leaving Aotearoa with the legacy we all experience today. The book calls readers into the New Covenant of total forgiveness, freedom from religious legalism and a faith rooted in love, grace and truth. Tiaki invited us to his upcoming book launch in July 2026.

Both shared the stories behind their books, illustrating how publication is not just a milestone but a testimony of obedience, perseverance and faith in God's timing.

Special attention was given to the Network Guidelines, especially for the new members, to ensure everyone understands expectations, how to participate and how to support one another on their writing journeys.

A highlight of the day was hearing from each member about their current writing projects. Many are at the start of their journeys, while one author, having just finished *The Church that Hurts*, began writing the book six months ago. Over this time, issues of cover-up culture and Church exposure have been widely in the spotlight, making this work particularly timely. She is now developing complementary policies to support church governance to keep churches safe.

One author shared his experience with a vanity publisher. He received a very professional-looking letter, but they requested \$7,000 upfront. After checking Google reviews, he discovered that others had strongly warned against them. It's a good reminder for us all to discern carefully who we work with around writing and publishing. The diverse experiences of attendees, from different walks of life, reinforced the richness of God's call on each of our lives.

The informal atmosphere, fostered by Dawn's warm hospitality, made it easy to connect over shared morning tea and lunch, sell and showcase books and pray together. One new member generously offered his expertise to help writers launch their projects, a beautiful reflection of SICBAN's collaborative spirit.

The day wrapped up with a mini-workshop by Verna McFelin, offering practical advice on marketing books as New Zealand Christian authors. Using resources from George Bryant and Reedsy.com, attendees gained actionable guidance on promoting their work authentically and relationally.

SICBAN continues to be a safe, inspiring and practical space for Christian writers to grow, share and encourage one another.

Our next gathering will be at the end of May 2026, and we look forward to welcoming even more writers to this vibrant community.



Verna McFelin



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.

Listening

By Stephen Douglas

Two Ears, One Mouth

Listen —
he who has ears to hear,
let him hear.

It pays dividends
to listen well
when spoken to.

It takes courage
to befriend another
who needs your listening ear,
rather than your speech.

Brother James taught;
“Be quick to listen,
slow to speak,
and slow to anger.”

Do not merely listen,
but take action.
In the doing,
you will be blessed.

Do not tell someone
to get over it —
help them get through it.

An old saying comes to mind:
we have two ears
and one mouth.

I remember this
as I shape these lines
about listening
before speaking.

The prophet Isaiah said,
“Listen well,
O royal house of David.”
In other words:
pay attention — hear me.

And again he said,
“Listen, O house of Jacob.”
Oh, that you had listened,
there would have been no need
to cut off your family line.

Jesus called to the crowd,
“Listen, and try to understand.
It is not what enters the mouth
that defiles a person,
but what comes out —
what is spoken from the heart.”

In their own eyes,
the way of a fool is right,
but the wise listen to advice.

To listen well,
become curious;
maintain eye contact,
give focused attention.

Go beyond the words you hear —
body language, tone, silence.

We feel loved
by those who take time
to hear our story
and ask gentle questions.

When you take time
to listen to a person,
you give them, and yourself,
a gift.

Am I Listening?

Another year has begun,
my mind
full of self-preservation.
Yet to listen well is to actually hear — to
hear,
what my brother, my sister,
is asking:
to meet them with
attention and eye.

Saint Francis, as I have
read and learned,
knew how to praise and pray —
singing with creatures and creation,
the quiet, open glories
of our Creator God.

His listening was with
mind and spirit,
alive to the near presence
of our Father.

David of Scripture learned
that adoration is the ground
of songs of praise.

He, too, had ears to hear
the soft breath of God's Spirit;
the harmony of
mortal and immortal
set into song.

He who has ears, let him hear.

Life, for me, is more than food,
work, and rest.

It is learning humility in action:
to bow my being,
to bend my breath,

before Him who breathed life
into my soul.

Godly listening is a clearing —
fear loosening into trust,
closed places opening

to the patience of the Holy,
unseen Father
who blesses the weak and frail.

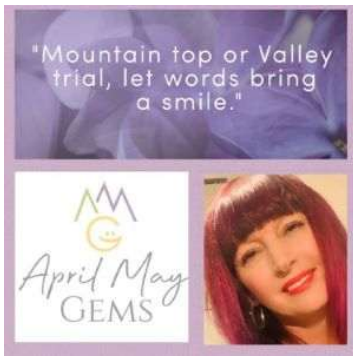
Through obedience,
doubts are unbound;
wrestling the restless "what if"
questions
until the heart can say:
"Yes —
I will taste and see
how good the LORD is."

I came without invitation.
I have lived another year.
I have been carried through
the night.
So with praise and worship,
I offer thanks
to the Keeper of my soul.

"Am I listening?"
will be my calling phrase
this year —
2026.

As the young lad
Samuel replied;
"Speak, your servant
is listening."

*Now that you have made me listen, I
finally understand—
Wisdom is shown to be right by its fruit.*



The Testimonial Christian Writing Tree, its many Branches and Me

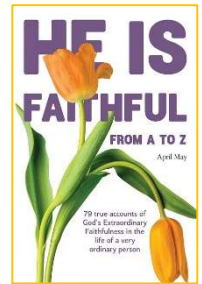
by April May, from April May Gems

One day in 2007 I went through the kind of traumatic experience any normal person would not want to wish upon their worst enemy. I buried my child.

Enter the commonality of the true Christian. I call it the Genesis 50:20 Flip: God taking a situation (like grief) that was meant to bring harm, turning it around, using it for good and then, for the good of others – and then, you tell everyone!

To cut a very long story short, I wanted to share with the whole world what God did during that tragedy, for me and through me, and so began my journey as a testimonial Christian writer.

The book I wanted to write however, became just one chapter of 79 in an entire volume of God's faithfulness in my life. Yes, 79 personal, true stories about God's faithfulness amid dire seasons of my life. I can assure you it created quite the chunk of a memoir! Not only could *He is Faithful from A to Z* tackle the taunts of an atheist's worldview but it could even take on the wind of a Wellington home and double up as a doorstop!

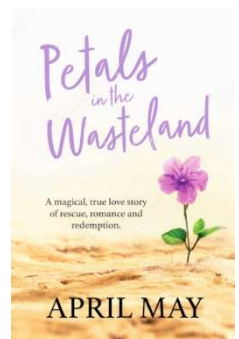


Next, I rolled over one day and wrote a children's book, *The Baby Who Went Straight to Heaven* (yes, just like that) to help little ones through grief after losing a loved one, particularly a sibling. A beautiful hard cover picture book, complete with hand-drawn illustrations from my eldest daughter (that we coloured in together) was the delightful result. It included pages for a child to write a letter to their loved one, colouring in pages, plus the Gospel, of course.

After that I banged on doors of bookstores and hounded radio stations for interviews and then, I wrote a novel; a love story. Every chapter in *Petals in the Wasteland* is based on real encounters I'd had with the lover of my own soul, Jesus.

Three branches from my testimonial Christian writing tree were now dropping seeds and bearing fruit, I hoped. (*Sheesh, I better start a website!*)

I did.





Next, I started a podcast by volunteering at my local radio station. The **April May Gems Show** aired every Tuesday night reaching a potential 108,000 people across the top of the South Island of NZ. The podcast also included a new budded branch of blogging. Every week I would include a blog to pair with a podcast. (*Sheesh, I'd better get a social media page!*)

I did.

I then wrote a 'purity principle' story for pre-teens. Once again, a testimonial branch. This story, *Pure as Gold*, was given to me on a silver spiritual spoon. (*I dreamed the whole story in a cartoon from beginning to end*). The pictures would be real photographs of two real teenagers and turned into caricatures. I currently await its publishing path to appear.

I have since begun writing *He is Faithful from A to Z – Volume 2* (because there are always more 'God stories' to share, right?!) and in addition I'm also writing a six-section poetry book, each section representing a decade of my life and each poem representing a Genesis 50:20 Flip. I saw this book in a dream as well, including the title, *Life in a Rhyme, Line Upon Line* on the very night I quit my job to write full-time.

"WOW!" I hear you gasp, what a cool life! (*Hmmm, please allow me to stop you right there and ponder instead a few questions you might want to ask...*)

Has this journey been easy? – *No! Most definitely not!*

Have I been taken for a ride? – *Yes! Heartbreakingly more than once!*

Have I been ripped off and left out in the cold by so-called-publisher's promises? – *Yes! Even by Christians!*

Has it taken effort to market and sell? – *Yes! And lots of tears and tech tantrums too!*

Have I made mistakes? – *Absolutely! My biggest one, I now give away for free as I endeavor to redeem myself from its epic fail!*

Has it been discouraging not knowing who is reading or listening, to the point of such despair that I seriously consider quitting altogether because, "Ahh, nobody cares. Whatever is even the point?" *A humongous Yes!*

Do I keep going, because I am called? (Not qualified by the way – I left school at 14!), but called – by God Himself? *A definite Yes! Yes, I do and I will!*

I have come to understand that it's not about what I see, it's about what God sees and I believe that one day, He will show me the fruit – from the branches that have grown and the seeds that have been sown from my testimonial Christian Writer Tree.

I look forward to that day.

April May

April May Gems, Author | Guest Speaker | Radio Host | Podcaster | Blogger

A Speck on the Map

by Jane Gallagher

love reaches for the holy land
where sirens rise
where they wait
for silence

let courage
step into kitchens
tiny hands
reach high

from Jerusalem's hills
to the shores
may you
protect them

in shelters
side streets
shops
all weary homes

replace
streaks of light
in flames
across
night skies

remember
neighbours,
creatures
great, small

the men, women
buried
beneath this

holy
ground

Treasure in Heaven

by Kathryn Paul

It's all about the people
At the end of it all
Do we value each other
Both great and the small?

There is one treasure
We take to Paradise
That is saved souls
Jesus paid the price.

I don't care about mansions
Or a gold-paved street
Sure, pearly gates will look nice
But joy is in who I'll greet.

Jesus said don't store on Earth
Store in Heaven your treasure
He wasn't meaning gold, silver,
It's souls that'll bring pleasure.

Our money's a useful tool
Souls we can help to save
When we tithe, donate
Good comes from what we gave.

When Christian writers connect
Who value each other
Each person who we meet
Is a sister or brother.

At the end of the day
It's not how much books made
It's the people we valued
In souls we'll be paid.

We will sing and we'll dance
Our joy will be complete
When together in Paradise
The treasure is who we'll meet.

Waikato Writers Group Poet's Corner Event

by Colleen Kaluza



Colleen Kaluza

Towards the end of last year, our writers group decided to host a Poet's Corner in which we could present an evening of fun entertainment and showcase some of our writing, or that of others we admire. So, on Friday evening, 20 February, we met at the Hamilton Northwest Baptist Church and what a wonderful Poet's Corner evening we had!

To be honest, I was a little anxious about how it would work out, as we'd never done something like this before and, at first, I was only receiving apologies for not being able to make it. But slowly, the emails started coming in to confirm attendance. Whew! What a relief!

I had randomly met a man at a cafe a couple of weeks before, who was writing something and I asked what he was writing. When Britain said he wrote poetry and that he loved Jesus, I invited him to our Poet's Corner evening, where he participated with some of his own poetry. What a blessing!



Eion Field

Another friend of mine, from Taupo, was coming up for the weekend for a mutual friend's birthday. I invited her to come up earlier and join us on the evening. Tracy writes poetry too and has published two books. She shared some of hers on the evening, as well.

We had a blast! One of my friends brought a box full of hats and whenever one of us stood up to present something, we could choose a hat to wear for our presentation. Some even brought their own hats!

Barbara was our MC and my friend, Shelley, with the hat box, provided a sparkly jacket that Barbara wore as MC. Shelley even recited a poem from her childhood. It was fun!



Barbara was MC at Poet's Corner



Joy reading poetry

We had some funny poems, silly ones, serious and sad ones. One of our members, Graham, shared a chapter from his book that will be published later this year. Not a poem, but a great story to listen to! Even our dear 90-year-old Joy, who hadn't thought she'd be able to come, attended and shared some of her poetry.

At the end of the hour and a half of entertainment, we finished off with some snacks that our members had brought. Sukhjeet was our manager of food and drinks. She did an excellent job.

Thank you to all who came to make the evening enjoyable and memorable! Perhaps we'll be able to do something like this again in the future.

River Notes

by Geraldine Crow

I am entranced

By the sound of river notes.

The high-fluted melodies

Lost to all but

Dogs and tuis.

Your voice, Jesus,

Sings in songs of life-giving water.

The tumble of rivers

Poured out in a mighty flood

From the throne room of God

To those wandering in the wilderness.

It is He who makes the rivers run

Through our dry desert heart,

Streams reviving the barren ground

Of our minds.

It is He who calls us to

Pause by the song of rivers

In their wanderings.

Let their rhythm calm your mind

So you may return

To the simple pleasure

Of resting beside a stream

On a hot summer's day.



Let's Celebrate!

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

Congratulations to Matt Froggatt for the release of *Beyond Our Horizons*.

Congratulations to Nicky Sims for the release of *View from the Top*.

Congratulations to Shirley Jamieson for her book *Ripple Effect* being released as an audio book in the Blind Low Vision Talking Book Library.

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/>

Publishers Association of NZ <https://publishers.org.nz/>

NZ Booklovers <https://www.nzbooklovers.co.nz/>

The Levant Crook and Jackal

by Nick Maeder

This poem began as a meditation on Ezekiel 34:14 *'I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be...* It attempts to explore the demanding reality of that divine promise.

The hands quit the thunder floor,
where unstilted streams braid of snow-melt, silt milky
and the thistle stands smother the barley.
They razed the wool and fled the flock to the jackal's whim;
and the squall stilled their cries.

I ascend, to where the chalkstone ridge heaves the ages through.
A shepherd knows that orange sheer—a goat-track, steeped and
necklaced into the rock precipice, facing East.

Up here, the stillness speaks:
the whisp wish of Khamsin breath caressing baking flint,
the far cry of griffon vulture, soaring the thermal ravine.
The water doesn't flow; it weeps the rock,
collecting in cisterns hewn from shade.
Time gazes, nay distils, a lucent perfect sky.

Millennia of scrub grass have earned their keep:
a resilience, etched by sun, raelam, moon and thorn.
The fold contours a solitary cup in the cliff,
it's stone crucible a polished tri-ponic wind whine.

I've scrambled the ravines, screed in showers and gloom,
where every rustle betrays a couching predator.
But here, on this high bare prominence,
the only staff that lights the ground is here,
in hand at noon.

Never trust a man with a crook clean,
bewitched by the cool of Bethlehem.
I listen for the Nazarene who broke this trail first,
who flows the nascent spring, assures the footing,
eyes the safe path through.

When evening's bitter chills phantom the chutes at dusk,
and stars fix their spark deep in virginal dark,
Through thee I will eschew all fear.
This gnarled palace high is just the doorstep.

Thy way is open. A lamp flames steady within—
bright, guided, free.

(This poem was refined through human-AI collaboration, a sculptor's chisel for the poet's hand).

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

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Writing Competitions Points Board

Level One		Level Two		Level Three	
Janet Scantlebury	18	Peter Wilson	24	Robert Prins	27
Jane Gallagher	15	Prue Francis	15	Kathryn Paul	15
Jenny Fazakerley	15	Debbie Bennett	12	Sandy Miller	12
Judy Kibby	12	Verna McFelin	12	Stephen Douglas	9
Sylvia Stump	12			Taylor Foster	9
Robin Simon	9			Pat Kerr	9

In each magazine, placegetters 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 are awarded monetary prizes for first, second and third. Prizes are: **\$60 for First Place**, **\$50 for Second Place**, and **\$40 for Third place**. These are usually awarded as Christian bookstore vouchers. Thank you to Andrew Stirling at www.purebooks.nz. Our next prize winners will be published in the June–July 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: After Jesus died on the cross, we are told that 'the earth shook, the rocks split... The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life' (Matthew 27:51-52 NIV). Pretend you are one of these resurrected ones—who may or may not have met Jesus—and describe this experience and the impact it has on you (450 words maximum).

General Comments

I received seven nicely written submissions to this competition, three of which were from first-time entrants. Thanks to everyone who gave it a go. You all made a great effort in tackling what was not as easy a topic as one might think.

When writing a first-person account of a spectacular historical, biblical or (in this case) supernatural event that is outside of your experience, it is vital to not only use your imagination to personalise and flesh out the story; you also need to consider how you and other witnesses to such an event would feel or react, and then express those feelings and

emotions in the narrative. For instance, the staggering sense of awe and wonder that must have been felt when people rose from the dead after Jesus committed his spirit into the Father's hands must have been truly incredible, and it is this awe and wonder that your reader needs to feel through your retelling of the biblical account. Not only will this make your story more engaging, but it will also evoke the reader's response to the takeaway message.

Of the seven entries received, First Place winner Jane Gallagher excelled at describing the event and expressing the emotions of the characters in her story. Second Place went to Sylvia Stump. Her opening dialogue with God in Heaven, and why he sent her back to Earth, is beautifully written and intriguing. I awarded Third Place Equal to Janet Scantlebury and to Robin Simon. Both began with good back stories and expressed emotions well. I particularly enjoyed the way Robin described the devil's abject fear upon realising Jesus had triumphed over death.

While all entries were well written, a common issue in two of them was the use of single quote marks instead of double speech marks in dialogue. The only time single quote marks should be used is when the speaker is quoting someone else's comment, but the dialogue itself must always be opened and closed with double speech marks. If a quote is at the end of the dialogue, then the single quote mark must come before the closing full stop/comma and double speech marks (...').").

First Place



Jane
Gallagher
of Wellington

Rise

A sharp jolt, then came the cracking. The stone seals had shifted. I stood. My burial linen hung loose as if life itself had burned through it. Through the seals, nothing but darkness, but there were voices.

Damp air touched my skin, every heartbeat a gift I didn't expect, I was impossibly alive. As I moved the ground was shaking as if an earthquake had passed. I could scarcely see because of the blackness. Nearby, I saw what I thought were three crucifixes, Roman soldiers still removing the bodies. More figures in linen emerged behind me and they walked with strength in their limbs. *How could this be?*

Ahead, a soldier, on his knees, his face buried in his bloodied hands. I approached him. For a while no words came out of his mouth—only a hollow stare.

He looked up, and said, '*He* cried out with a loud groan and gave up his spirit.' A sharp inhale caught the soldiers throat. 'We thought the end of all days had come.'

'Who cried out?' I asked, my lungs spluttering into motion.

'YESHUA, King of the Jews,' he said. 'How on earth—Who are you?'

For a moment I pondered whether I was dreaming. ‘How? I don’t know.’ He grabbed my arm, and I knew then I was real. ‘Yoav of Arimathea, once a Pharisee.’ I said. ‘I left everything to follow *him*, YESHUA. Caught by soldiers I was taken before the Council and sentenced to death.’ I fell to my knees. Not a star in the sky.

Soon, he pulled me up. ‘We must follow, see where they are taking *him*,’ he said.

Others who had risen began following too. People parted way for them. Women, sobbing beside the cart they’d placed *him* on. We hurried, we talked. My words flying.

‘We were exchanging Roman coins for temple currency. I charged inflated prices, exploiting people who came to worship. *He* came up to me. *His* eyes seeing not only my face but heart. It was as if nothing in your life was hidden.’ The Roman soldier began to shake uncontrollably.

‘I helped nail him to the crucifix. One blow. I couldn’t continue. *He* looked at me too.’

I remembered the widow’s son in Nain, I saw the young man, he sat up and began to speak. Yeshua raised him. Questions raced. What is God’s purpose for me? Will I die again and rise again? Should I go to the Temple? Will they kill me again?

‘I’m alive!’ I shouted. The joy was as radiant as the morning sun. ‘If *he* raised me, surely *he* will rise,’ I said, shaking the soldier excitedly. ‘Hurry...’

Second Place



Sylvia
Stump
of Wellington

New Life

In a garden more beautiful than Eden, I walked alongside God as He conveyed to me many timeless mysteries of heaven and earth. The path we were on led us past beds of flowers that spilt over their edges as if they had forgotten where they were supposed to stop: velvet-red roses, clouds of white alyssum and tall blue delphiniums caught the light but none of their beauty distracted me from the company I was keeping.

“Some day soon, a day will come that won’t compare to any of your past experiences,” God told me. “The future will be forever. You will have an indestructible body. All creatures will know peace. Strivings will cease, human potential will be unfettered. Your dreams, though they seem lofty right now, will be but a tiny fleck compared to the matchless reality awaiting you, just beyond the horizon, over there.”

I couldn’t fathom this, because even now I couldn’t fathom the extent of God’s love. I leaned into Him, feeling clueless. As I did, I heard distant peals of thunder. I was not afraid because God was with me but He made me look over towards the storm. “What’s that?” I asked. “It’s what comes first,” was all He said. I knew what He meant.

I had lived my life on earth and knew all about its rage and its devils. I remembered my former life, and the path God had picked out for me. I knew He was sending me back there now. Maybe it was a privilege to see Him at His most vulnerable, but still I had to ask, “Why?” He didn’t need to explain, though, because I knew the reason. Only by seeing this, would I finally grasp the full extent His love for me. So I walked into the storm. I saw the curtain in the temple torn in two. I saw rocks split apart. I saw my own grave break open. And I stepped towards the cross where Jesus breathed His last breath. I looked around me and heard people cry out, “He really was the son of God.” So many horrified soldiers, many of them praying now, but with so much guilt in their eyes that they probably wished the earth would swallow them up. And the crowd of people who were mesmerised by my appearance and others who had risen from their graves. They really couldn’t process what had just happened. But I knew this was only the beginning, and I felt ok.

Third Place Equal



Janet
Scantlebury
of Raglan

Risen From the Dead

Here I was resting peacefully in the bosom of Abraham when something quite extraordinary happened.

What put me in the bosom of Abraham you may ask?

In the year of our Lord 30, under the rule of Tiberius Caesar, my life came to an abrupt end.

Some called me a holy man but I was not holy. Just an ordinary man who saw too many injustices inflicted on my people. One day in our village of Anathoth the Romans came unexpectedly. We held our breaths as they marched arrogantly through our dust-covered streets to the town centre. It was decreed that we present ourselves and provide the denarius tax demanded, a full day’s wages. Ahead of me in line was my dear neighbour Mattathias. His pleas to be given more time were ignored, a large Roman soldier stepped forward, whipping him mercilessly as we stood frozen in fear. His piercing cries rang out and something inside me stirred.

“In God’s name stop!” I yelled as I lunged at the soldier beating him. These were to be my last words. From behind me a Roman soldier I didn’t see suddenly approached bringing down his gladius sword violently on me. I died almost instantly.

Now to return to my story of the moment when something quite remarkable happened in that place of peace and rest.

An incredible surge of heat and light had penetrated my whole being lifting me powerfully onto my feet, through a veil that I can only explain as into another realm or dispensation. A great sense of well-being and joy flooded my soul and body as I walked along a familiar road. Yes I was back in Jerusalem once again. Other beings walked with me; I can only assume that they like me had come from another world. It was almost as if a choir of angels rejoiced and yet there was no sound. Just an awesome sense of God's presence and purpose.

I was reminded of a previous visit to these streets, a time when rumours were spreading fast of a promised messiah – a man they told us who healed the blind, the crippled. I had come to Jerusalem as I did frequently for festivals and other events. On this particular Sabbath I was passing by the Pool of Bethesda. A large crowd had gathered, and there was a great sense of excitement. Apparently a paralysed man had miraculously stood up. As I peered over the shoulders of those gathered, it was then that I saw him. Since then I have come to know this man in a way far deeper than that first encounter. I rejoice that I shall now join him in eternity.

Third Place Equal



Robin
Simon
of Canterbury

Resurrection

Caiaphas and I grew up together as kids. His arrogance and naked ambition stopped us getting close. It was no surprise to me that he ended up high priest. I opted to become a physician. My desire was to help people rather than rule them.

The last time I saw Caiaphas was after I'd become ill. I had heard the stories of Jesus. There were even rumours that he might be the messiah. I ran into Caiaphas at a birthday gathering. I asked him, 'What do you think of this Galilean, is he the Messiah?' Caiaphas's explosion of anger took me by surprise. He loudly berated me about being ignorant of the scriptures then marched off.

And so I died. I entered the realm of the dead. I learned that I, and some others, were to be ruled by demons with the devil at the head. He exerted a power of control and fear over everyone.

A time came of great excitement. 'We've done it,' screamed the devil. He pointed to the body lying in front of him. 'We've killed God. Now all the kingdoms belong to me.' I looked at the broken and beaten body. I knew the body belonged to Jesus.

While the devil and his demons rejoiced, there was a faltering in the celebrations. The body on the slab moved. The body sat up. The devil started screaming, 'No!' Jesus

opened his eyes. The whole realm was flooded with light. The demons ran for cover. The devil was curled up in a foetal position. Jesus walked over to our group. He showed us two keys, which he had taken off the devil. 'Go,' he said, 'Tell the world I now hold the keys of hell and death.'

Then, I was standing outside my tomb. I stumbled towards home. Going past Caiaphas's place, I decided to visit. Caiaphas wasn't looking well. He could only stare at me. 'Jesus lives,' I blurted out. 'He has conquered death.' Caiaphas threw a fit and started screaming at me. 'Liar, liar liar. Get out of here.'

I arrived home. The door opened and there was my wife. She didn't look overly surprised. She ran to me and hugged me. 'What happened?' she asked. All I could answer was one word, 'Jesus.' My wife nodded with understanding. She then filled me in on the goings on that had happened in Jerusalem over the last couple of weeks. 'Quick,' I said to my wife, 'Call all our family and friends. I have a great story to tell them, and wonderful good news to proclaim.'

Level Two

Judge: Shirley Jamieson

Requirement: Psalm 16:10-11 is a prophecy of Jesus' resurrection. Write an email to a non-believing friend who is grieving the loss of a Christian loved one. Quoting parts of the verses, explain how Jesus' resurrection fulfils them. Show sympathy and understanding, and avoiding preaching, tell from personal experience that Jesus is the path to life (500 words).

General Comments

Psalm 16:10-11 is so amazing. Imagine it; 1,000 years before Jesus walked in Jerusalem, King David prophesied about him. God had told David that one day a descendant from his line would be the Messiah who would die but be resurrected to life forever. What is more, the Messiah was the path to life.

For the topic this month, I chose these verses to be included in an email to a non-believer who is grieving. The comforting, supportive words from a friend mean so much at a time like this. A non-believer most likely would not know about the prophesy. Maybe reading it in an email could light a spark of hope and give validation that the stories in the Bible about Jesus are true.

The apostle Peter used these verses as strong evidence to prove Jesus is the Messiah. He quoted Psalm 16:8-11 and taught about it in his speech at Pentecost in Acts 2:24-32.

One of the points in the requirements for this month was to avoid preaching. When someone is going through the trauma of grief, showing kindness and caring is so important. Preaching could get an unfavourable response from a non-believer at any time. During grief, he or she might find it impossible to take it in at all.

In 2014 when my disabled daughter, Janelle, died, I was shattered for months. It still hurts, but I continue to be confident I will meet her again. I believe when I see Janelle, she will have a healthy, well-formed body. In my imagination she will come running up to me, give me a hug and say, 'I love you, Mum.' She couldn't do any of those things before, but the love of God always shone in her smile.

Jesus is the path to life! One day, he is coming back as the King of Kings.

I received four entries to the competition this month. Each entrant showed imagination in developing the connection to a grieving friend and showed caring and hope.

Formatting was an issue. I suggest when writing an entry for the competitions, after typing in the title, set the formatting at that point. Check the Christian Writer competition requirements and 'tick all the boxes' that are required. It can sometimes be difficult to change it all later.

While marking the entries, I found a couple of things that we all need to be aware of. It is important to correctly quote your chosen version of the Bible, and not to use words from the King James Version instead. Many words have changed their meaning in the last few hundred years. Also, some common traditions about heaven are so well-known, they are often mistaken for biblical truth.

I awarded Prue Francis first place. Prue's email to Jennie is full of genuine understanding in what it is like to lose a precious loved one. It flows from treasured memories to grief and loss, to the bright joy of hope.

Verna McFelin won second place. She shows loving sensitivity throughout the email to Amanda. I was impressed with the way she knitted her email together, portraying how their mutual friend, Ruth, had lived her life of faith.

Peter Wilson achieved third place. He shows concern for Graham in the loss of Maggie, and his strong testimony highlights the verses in Psalm 16:10-11. Peter's desire to see Graham saved brought some preaching into the email, but he closes by inviting him to church and praying God will bless him.

Sometimes it is hard to know what to say to people who are grieving. These three entries will give readers examples of comforting ways we can reach out to them.

First Place



Prue
Francis
of New
Plymouth

Dear Jennie

Dear Jennie

You and I have shared many exciting times, supporting and confiding in each other since our student days. I know that this is a time when many will be helping you in the best ways they know how. I would love to be sitting with you right now, crying with you as you remember John. My prayer is that my words can both comfort you and give you hope.

It's true that grief is something we carry for the years we live on earth and I know how overwhelming it is, especially in this first year. I understand how you must be feeling as you wake up each morning, if you have managed to sleep at all. I used to wake up believing it was a bad dream, stumbling through the days in a haze of tears. Later, my emotions fluctuated between gratitude for my husband's life and intense grief that we are now separated. Sometimes I laugh at a memory; other times I plummet into self pity.

You know about my Christian beliefs. You also know that my loss has been eased because of my belief in Jesus' resurrection. He gives us hope that death isn't the full stop at the end of a chapter. It certainly wasn't the end for him. I know you understand how Jesus' death was foretold thousands of years before it actually happened. Psalm 16:10 mentions that God will not see his 'faithful one see decay.' If that was true for Jesus, it's also true for us. Your John believed that. He is now alive with Jesus. I love the promise in the following verse too. 'You will fill me with joy in your presence.' That can only mean that John is not only alive, but joyfully alive.

I find hope in knowing that my loved one is alive in Jesus' presence. My David is experiencing life in its most fulfilling sense. Your John is pain free, joyful and encountering 'eternal pleasures' beside the Jesus he loved. As I sit with you in my imagination, I can hear your words,

"But that doesn't fully console me when I'm taken over by grief. I understand that John is alive and with Jesus but how do I cope with things like returning alone to a favourite picnic spot we shared? Or hearing his favourite song?"

I know those things are hard. Little parts of me still shatter into pieces when I unexpectedly come across something David's written. Yet through it all, I know that the 'forever life' Jesus gives surpasses anything we can imagine. I remind myself daily that God designed my life for a purpose and to live out that purpose in joy. It's the only way I know to defeat the nagging sense of loss and grief. My prayer is that you will find hope and peace in knowing this too.

Much love to you, as always.

Prue.

Second Place



Verna
McFelin
of Christchurch

Thinking of You and Ruth

Amanda my dear friend,

My heart is so heavy with the loss of Ruth. The weight of it has been sitting with me and I find myself aching not only for her absence but for you as well. I so wish I could be sitting with you right now, sharing the silence and memories over a cup of coffee. I'm totally crushed that I can't be with you in person. Over the years, we've been through so much together and I wanted you to know that I'll do anything for you.

When I heard she'd received a terminal diagnosis, I was just shattered. Ruth was a woman who lived every day with life, faith and warmth. Even though she was going through an incredibly difficult time, there was always something about the way she walked, a quiet trust in Him, a peaceful calm that seemed impossible to understand. I found inspiration in her faith more times than she probably realised.

She would often quote Psalm 16, *"You will not leave me to the grave, nor let your faithful servant decay... Because of you I know the path of life, I am filled with the pleasure of your presence and at your right hand are delights forevermore!"* She hung onto those words, they were a deep promise that I know that she clung to in her final days. For Ruth, that "path of life" was not an abstract idea, it was a Person. She knew that Jesus Himself is the path to life, the way into the Father's presence and because she walked with Him, she faced death not as an end but as a doorway. As you already know, I also carry that same hope in my heart.

I can't stop thinking of that time we sat in the garden after we came home from church and laughed and laughed because Ruth said something so funny, "If I have to hear one more hymn in a row, I'll have to get up and conduct the choir!" It reminds me of her joy, her love and dry humour, how much she loved the people around her.

Amanda, I pray that you will find some comfort in knowing that Ruth approached this season of life with quiet confidence that God wouldn't abandon her and that love and life continue beyond what we see. I've been thinking of those small moments of her laughter, her encouragement and those little gestures that made each person feel seen. These memories and the hope she held onto, will be treasures that will never grow old.

I want you to know that I'll be here for you anytime you need me. I should be back home in a couple of months. If you need someone to talk to, we can catch up via Messenger and you can call me any time of the day or night. I'll be here for you, Amanda, no matter how or when you need me.

With Love, Verna xx

Third Place



Peter
Wilson
of New
Plymouth

An Email

Hello Graham,

My heartfelt sympathy goes out to you for your loss of Maggie. From discussions I had with Maggie at various times I am sure she will have passed joyfully into the next life to be welcomed by her Saviour, Jesus. Just as Maggie did, I too have a very strong belief in Jesus and in life after death.

Recently I was reading one of the Psalms (Psalm 16) and I thought of you and your great loss. I am sure you will be missing her immensely and you have no doubt told her so in many imaginary conversations.

I don't know what transpired in your lives before I met you that set you on such different paths of belief but I would love you to know that regardless of what has happened, God will still welcome you if you can reach out in the belief that he is able and willing to pardon any sin. As the Psalmist says, "He will show you the path of life" (v11). While I am sure Maggie is not unhappy in heaven, I am equally sure she would rejoice immensely to have you join her there when your time on earth is finished. As would Jesus.

I was only eighteen when I first met Jesus. I had met a girl I was interested in, and she asked me if I was a Christian. Some religious happenings had recently challenged my thinking a little, so I said "Yes, I was". This gave her the opportunity to talk about her relationship with Jesus which I soon realised was completely different to anything I had known. As a result, I asked Jesus into my life and decided to follow Him.

Over the years I have come to believe that knowing the truth about Jesus is the most important single reality we need. It has such everlasting consequences.

Psalm 16: v10 says 'He will not see corruption' (some translations say 'rot in the grave') which to me is one of many confirmations Jesus is alive to this very day and will be forever more.

One thing I am certain of is that Jesus will always welcome anyone who genuinely seeks Him regardless of whatever has happened in the past. The whole point of His time on earth was to make possible the way for us to find God so we can spend eternity with Him.

We are all sinful to a greater or lesser degree, as I am sure you will agree, but it does not matter to God how sinful we are, but whether we are prepared to acknowledge our need of His forgiveness and accept the gift of eternal life He so willingly offers. The gift that Jesus won for us on that cross, when He paid the penalty for our sin.

I am sure there are many in the church, and I certainly would be one, who would welcome you as a brother in the faith.

Praying God's blessings for you,

Peter.

Level Three

Judge: Julia Martin

Requirement: You have been asked to present a tribute at a funeral service. Write out your speech about the deceased who may have been known to you or be entirely fictional. Use humour if appropriate (350 words).

General Comments

At some stage in life, many of us face the prospect of delivering a tribute or eulogy at the funeral service of someone we know – possibly a family member, friend or acquaintance.

This can come at a time of emotional upheaval and grief, and the tribute often needs to be prepared at short notice.

Suggested points to consider in preparing a tribute:

1. Structure your speech with a beginning, a middle and an end.
2. Briefly introduce yourself and explain your relationship with the deceased.
3. Share significant details of their life including achievements and characteristics that define the person's life and personality.
4. Focus on your cherished memories in a positive manner and a conversational style.
5. Be truthful but avoid embarrassing or private details.
6. Include humour if appropriate but remain respectful.
7. Keep the tribute brief – 5 to 10 minutes unless your tribute is the main one outlining the person's life history.
8. If appropriate, share the hope and comfort that comes from having faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.
9. Close the tribute with a satisfying ending which may be a comforting saying or quotation, a poem, or scripture.
10. Have a written copy on hand in case emotions overwhelm you and you lose your train of thought.

I received six entries for this competition. Each of the tributes was sincere, sharing memories and giving positive affirmation to the deceased. The mood of the tributes was often tempered by appropriate humour.

I awarded first place to Kathryn Paul for her poignant reminiscence concerning childhood days with her older brother whose life came to a tragic ending.

Second place went to Robert Prins who paid tribute to an interesting character who touched his life.

Third place- getter, Pat Kerr, also chose a person who had lived a humble but consistent life which impacted many people during his 101 years.

My grateful thanks to the other members whose thoughtful tributes were a pleasure to read.

First Place



Kathryn
Paul
of Auckland
South

For us Both

I was nineteen when my brother committed suicide. At his funeral I could only cry. This is the tribute I couldn't say.

Earle, this little sister looked up to you in adoration, awe and a bit of fear. Remember when you were in that raft race and I ran out of tomatoes to pelt you with from the bridge? I moved to the bank and threw mud. You lost your cool and leaped off the raft threateningly. I scrambled.

I loved your sense of humour. I recall I was in the front seat of the car and you were in the back. I reached down to plug in my seatbelt and accidentally grabbed your hairy toes. You smirked and I giggled helplessly. Then, that time you were sitting hidden behind the spread of your newspaper, I peeled my orange and a stream of juice shot over the paper. I froze as ever-so-slowly, you lowered it down, staring at me. Then you smirked. I couldn't stop giggling for ages.

You were a passionate musician. I lost count of the various musical instruments you taught yourself to play. I loved it when you asked me to play chords on a guitar while you rushed from one instrument to the next, keeping in time. I felt proud whenever I saw you busking with your guitar and thought, 'That's *my* brother'.

One time, I sat in your drumkit room, and you played like 'Animal' from the muppets, long hair flinging wildly. A drumstick flew out of your sweaty palm like a bullet, hitting the wall beside me. *Dangerous stuff*, I thought. But the desire was sown in me to play the drums too.

I saw signs of your mental health declining, but you were a grown man. I couldn't lock you up to prevent it, but I had felt concerned.

I'm glad you believed in Jesus Christ and I trust He would have been speaking to you in your last moments. He's faithful. I believe I will see you again in Heaven. In the meantime, I'll be playing the drums for us both.

Second Place



Robert
Prins
of Auckland East

A Tribute to Bert

If Bert was standing behind this lectern, he would've had to stand on tip-toes to see you all, but what he lacked in height he made up for in a life of sweet service to Christ. So in honour of Bert, this tribute is going to be short and sweet.

Bert was an ordinary man. He had no special talents and hated being the centre of attention. Nothing made Bert stand out or drew our attention to him, but he was a man of character and we will all miss him.

There were two characteristics I admired about Bert: he was devoted to Christ, and he could laugh at himself.

He once asked me if I could help stack chairs after church. I was busy, so I replied, "Yes, I'll be with you shortly." With a twinkle in his eye he replied, "My name is Bert, not Shortly. No one knows my name, but they all know my height."

He was always there to stack chairs, clean toilets or sweep floors. But what we didn't know about Bert was that he was a man who prayed for his family, his friends and church family by name every day. He loved you.

Bert lived modestly. We dined at his house many times, as most of us have. He never had a new car or expensive furniture. None of us knew it, but Bert gave most of his money away to people who needed it—including many of you who are here today.

He was not much of a reader, but he always read his Bible and practised what he read. If Christ said it, Bert did it. He was a true follower of Christ. Every time I shared a problem with Bert, he was always spot on with his wise Biblical advice.

I visited Bert just before he died. He said he was waiting for his pre-resurrection nap. "See you in the morning," he said to me as I left. The morning will come when Jesus returns.

Bert, we will miss you, but we'll see you 'shortly', on the resurrection morning.



Third Place



Pat
Kerr
of Roxburgh

Jim

What an achievement!

One hundred and one years, three months and thirteen days from birth to death!

A full life, well lived, with five generations here to prove it.

Jim was just sixteen when World War II broke out. He was too young to enlist. Instead he played an important man's role working on a potato farm to keep the country fed.

Later he was a very convivial, generous grocer, first in Invercargill and then, until retirement, in Mosgiel. Whereas some grocers gave children sweets, Jim and Helen gave pies and buns to local children who obviously were hungry. No questions asked. The need was real. They fed them.

He was a lovely, loving man, gentle, mild mannered, quietly spoken. He loved Helen until her death. She had Alzheimers, in care for many years. She didn't know him, yet he turned up every meal time to feed her, and talk, until she died.

Their beginning was difficult. Helen was a young war widow who lost her child to cot death. Jim cherished her. Together they raised four children and one grandchild who called him Dad. The grocery business was attached to the house enabling him to be a hands-on Dad, lovely with all kids, including visiting relatives like us country kids. We treasured his shop-treats- lollies, ice-blocks, fruit. Thanks Jim.

Jim's last years, post Covid, were spent in a Rest Home, in Apartment 16. He wrote me a lovely letter inviting me to his 100th birthday, no gifts, his shout, sent months before the actual date, always optimistic and hospitable.

I didn't get to the party, but I did visit him, with lollies, in his Apartment, a small room with a garden view. He was content, keen to chat and reminisce, and very knowledgeable on many subjects: Riverton schooldays, early work experience, delivering groceries on a bicycle in all weathers, brothers and friends, school fun and after-school capers.

Life was good to Jim. He was happy with his lot. He will be content now, meeting His Maker, reuniting with Helen and his loved ones.

Rest in Peace, Gentleman Jim.

Competitions for June 2026

Due by 1 May 2026

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

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

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

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

NB: If you are not sure which level you're on, email Debbie McDermott at: level1@nzchristianwriters.org

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

Level One—for members 16 years old and over

Requirement: Research and write a mini biography on the life and death of a Christian who was martyred during the Renaissance period (15th and 16th centuries AD). Include a brief bibliography comprising only three references. At least 80% of the biography must be in your own words, so ensure you keep citations to a minimum (500 words, excluding the bibliography). (Reminder – formatting requirements are above).



Debbie

Email entry to Debbie McDermott at level1@nzchristianwriters.org

Level Two—for members 16 years old and over

Requirement: Write a letter to the editor of a secular newspaper regarding a current issue. Use a Biblical perspective (250 words). (Reminder – formatting requirements are above).

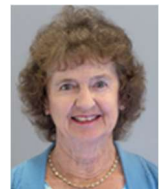


Shirley

Email entry to Shirley Jamieson at level2@nzchristianwriters.org

Level Three—for members 16 years old and over

Requirement: Choose an Old Testament character who you either admire or despise. Write a character study of this person and explain why you feel this way, and what lessons can be learned from their example. Back up your reasons with scripture (400 words). (Reminder – formatting requirements are above).



Julia

Email entry to Julia Martin at 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.