

DECEMBER 2025 - JANUARY 2026

THE CHRISTIAN writer

SEE INSIDE FOR

Articles:

Wellington Workshop Report
NZCW Spring Seminar Report
Honouring Faithful Servants Report
Grace Bell Publishing
Making the Most of your Membership

Book Reviews:

Comfort and Cheer by Rosie Boom
Wonder by Chris Bovill

Writing Competition Prize Winners

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.*

President: Justin St Vincent: president@nzchristianwriters.org

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

For magazine contributions, address changes and membership queries.

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

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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're excited to be sharing with you our Christmas/New Year edition of our magazine, *The Christian Writer*, for Dec 2025-Jan 2026. It's that time of year again when Christmas is almost here. I believe it's a season when people are more inclined to lean into Christian faith, attend a local church and perhaps be more attuned to hearing, reading and watching the greatest story ever. Let's keep our eyes focused on Jesus, in awe and wonder of His birth, death and resurrection. I'm reminded that we serve a God of wonders. In Psalm 136:3-4, NKJV, we read: *O, give thanks to the Lord of lords! For His mercy endures forever: To Him who alone does great wonders, for His mercy endures forever.* Let's anticipate the new year season with positive expectancy as God guides us towards completing a good work in us. As Paul writes in Philippians 1:6, NKJV: *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'm delighted to announce NZ Christian Writers will have a brand-new website in 2026. We're currently in the early design and development stages of our website, which will have a new look with increased functionality for our members. Based on our website roadmap, we anticipate by mid-2026 we'll have an improved, wonderful user-friendly website for members.

I want to take a moment to say congratulations to our end-of-year competition winners. Thank you to our competition coordinator, Debbie McDermott, our competition judges and all our writers who have entered competitions throughout 2025. With many new members in our growing collective, we anticipate more new members entering our bimonthly writing competitions during 2026. In addition, I want to thank our amazing magazine editor, Kathryn Paul, who shares her skills of collaboration, coordination and creativity in preparing and publishing a quality magazine for our members. Our collective continues to be blessed by you both. Plus, a massive THANK YOU! to our faithful board members who continue to shape the future direction for NZ Christian Writers. Thanks go to: Janet Fleming, Kathryn Paul, Andrew Stirling, Julia Martin, Janette Busch, and Christel Jeffs. I appreciate and am grateful for the individual contributions you make to our collective.

Thanks again to member and photographer, Elaine Dixon, who once again showcases her incredible gift of photography with the photo featured on the front cover of this edition of *The Christian Writer*.

On behalf of the board of NZ Christian Writers, may you each have a enjoying and relaxing Christmas and New Year season together with family and friends.

Be blessed

Justin St Vincent

Editorial: God's Love is Power

by Kathryn Paul



How well did you do this year with reaching your writing goals? Did you achieve what you planned, if you set goals at the start of 2025? This is a good time to celebrate all you have managed to do, even if it's not as much as you hoped. The important question is, did you move forward in some way? Every step forward is worth celebrating. Have a think about the things you learned during 2025 which will help you move forward during 2026.

Planning for the new year ahead, I encourage you to write down your writing and publishing goals. Then identify the pathways you need to take to achieve them. The best goal to have is to seek the Lord, draw closer to Him and discover and follow the pathway He wants to lead you on. What are some of the ways you can actively seek the Lord in the months ahead? Perhaps planning a personal prayer retreat or keeping a regular quiet time will be on your list. I love to draw close to the Lord through worship and this is something I do regularly.

Remember that although you might be working at your writing in solitude, you're not alone. Connect with the Lord and connect with other Christian writers to maintain your enthusiasm throughout the year. In the right season and timing, you will reap a harvest, but a lot of work must happen first before harvesting time arrives. I've appreciated connecting with writer-friends at the Northland Christian Writers group. They have been a real blessing in my life and I love seeing them making progress in their own unique writing journeys.

Are you willing to step out of your comfort zone? The more you stretch yourself through new experiences, the more content you will have to bring into your writing. Remember, most of all, the power of love. God's Word promises us that '*love never fails*'. When we have God's love in us, we have a secret inner power.

The world interprets and presents power-abilities and power-authority a certain way. God doesn't show His power the way the world expects it to be. His power is superior to everything else and He shows His power through the fruit of the Holy Spirit. His power can flow through us as people, through our lives and our writing. Let's move on into the new year together with positive expectations. Remember, you're not alone.

With love in Jesus,
from Kathryn

I love to hear from our readers. Email: 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 January 2026. The deadline for *Young Christian Writer* is 10 February 2026.** 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.

Local Writers Group Leaders Wanted

Are willing to facilitate a Christian writers' group? Please get in touch to find out more details. Email Justin at president@nzchristianwriters.org or Kathryn at editor@nzchristianwriters.org

Book Reviews Criteria

Members are welcome to request a book review of any of their published books. 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

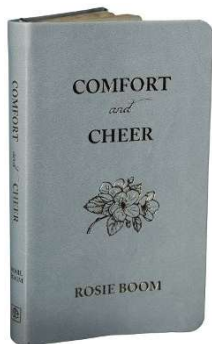
If you are an older mother who would like to write an article for future issues of *Raising Godly Mothers* or if you are a young mother who is struggling, please contact Shing at rgm@rgm.co.nz. For information or to subscribe to the magazine visit: www.rgm.co.nz

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.

Book Review



Comfort and Cheer

By Rosie Boom

Review by Julia Martin

Published by Boom Tree Publishing 2025

Well-known author, singer/songwriter, public speaker and mother of six, Rosie Boom has produced this beautiful book (her 13th) entitled *Comfort and Cheer*.

Her book contains 'Treasured Words of Hope and Encouragement' and is a compilation of relevant scriptures and inspirational quotes by well-known Christians such as C.H. Spurgeon, Amy Carmichael and C.S. Lewis – all beautifully illustrated with exquisite drawings of flowers, birds, bees and butterflies by Rosie's late mother, Leone Harris, and other family members.

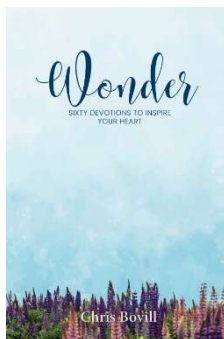
Rosie claims her love of encouraging quotes was inspired by her mother, and it was a long-time dream of Rosie's to combine these quotes, scriptures, and her mother's beautiful drawings into a book for others to enjoy and share.

Writing from her perspective, Rosie taps into the human experience common to many of us of suffering, pain, trauma, sadness, betrayal, loneliness and grief.

She writes: 'My prayer is that each person who reads *Comfort and Cheer* will also experience the tender compassion and love of the Father. That each troubled soul will find a place of refuge and peace in Christ's love. That the broken and hurting will feel the balm of Gilead soothing and healing their pain. That hope will replace despair, and joy swallow up sorrow.'

I believe this little book will become a treasured possession for constant reference, and an aid for comforting and encouraging those struggling with life's challenges and adversity.

Book Review



Wonder

By Chris Bovill

Review by Julia Martin

Published by Tom Curtain Publishing 2024

After the success of her first book *Flourish* in 2023, Chris has compiled a second set of 60 devotions in her new book entitled *Wonder*.

Married to a dairy farmer in the Waikato and the mother of six adult children she homeschooled in the past, Chris has a God-given gift of being able to draw profound spiritual lessons from her everyday life to share without preaching.

She draws inspiration from family and farming life, biblical characters, her observation and appreciation of nature and the outdoors, her failures and successes, and lessons learned from her relationship with the Lord.

I found Chris's devotions uplifting and challenging. She is not afraid to bare her soul concerning her struggles and challenges in life. But she also reveals a deep and intimate relationship with God as a result of spending quality time in prayer and meditation on God's Word. She completes each devotion with a relevant verse from scripture.

Chris writes: 'My heartfelt prayer is that you find sacred moments with the Saviour and hear His gentle whispers that inspire your heart to wonder at His love for you through these stories, testifying to His loving character.'

If you enjoyed Chris's first book, then this second one will not disappoint.

It's a delightful collection of inspirational devotions which will be a joy to read and a gift to share.

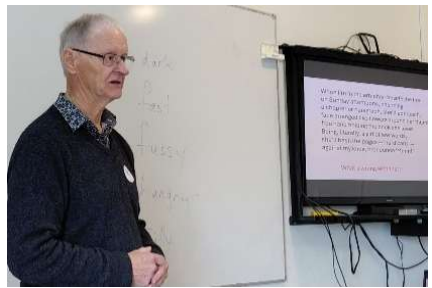
Wellington Workshop

Let's Write Better

by Stephen Douglas
Christian Writers Hutt Valley and Beyond

The committee wanted to bring the Wellington group together, and a workshop-style day seemed ideal. Ossie knew experienced author and teacher, Ken Edgecumbe, who kindly agreed to lead our day focused on improving our writing. Ken drew from his experience as an English teacher, and former Director of Scripture Union, compiling study notes and writing resources. His chosen title, *Let's Write Better*, summed up the spirit of the day—writing better is always a necessity.

Our venue was the Titahi Bay Community Church, Porirua. Ossie opened with words of welcome and prayer, followed by a shared morning tea. Around 20 attendees gathered in a side room with tables to listen to Ken's presentation, which began with the theme "We only have words", drawn from the Bee Gees' song *Words*. And from scripture; "It doesn't matter what the serpent spoke, it is what was said," reminding us that words are powerful—the primary factor in all writing.



Ken stated three key factors for every writer to consider:

1. What do I want to say and who am I writing for (Audience)
2. Purpose—use of a theme(s); what do I want the reader to do (Aim)
3. What will help the reader do that and stay engaged (Other stuff; word count, cover, etc.)

Then from his teaching and experience on writing and editing, he emphasised;

- Passion connects writer and reader—your words must burn in you before they can reach others
- Structure paragraphs effectively, vary sentence length, and choose simple, precise words.
- Too many syllables or prepositions can weigh a sentence down; clarity is key.
- Check your grammar; use active phrasing, and ensure tenses and pronouns are correct.

We broke for lunch—a bring-your-own affair—while Rosa kindly looked after drinks and kitchen needs. Conversation continued informally over lunch, circling around words and writing.



Wellington Workshop Let's Write Better

In the afternoon, Ken turned to the topic 'Reason for Writing – We Only Have Words'. He spoke about getting tone right, as tone sets the mood and connects deeply with readers. Reading aloud helps detect tone and remove assumptions. Writers must remain true to themselves and be clear about what they want the reader to do. He quoted George Orwell's timeless reminders:

- Never use a metaphor, simile, or other figure of speech you are used to seeing in print.
- Never use a long word where a short one will do. (Unless it is a technical piece.)
- If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.
- Use active rather than passive phrasing.
- Never use foreign phrases or jargon when plain English (or your main language) will work.

We closed with a handout quoting well-known authors on the craft of writing. Philip Yancey reminded us that what writers most want is to connect, while James A. Michener noted that to write a book, an author must feel the story deeply themselves.

A generous koha was collected to thank Ken for his time and insight. We left encouraged, inspired, and ready to write better.

Songwriting DIY

Column by Felicity Logan

Part Seven: Pointers for the Chorus

If you end up with a verse-chorus-verse-chorus form, let your chorus take ideas from the verse. Here are pointers for the chorus:

- Maybe repeat words from the final line of the verse, in a more rousing manner.
- It sounds good if the notes lead higher compared with the verse (e.g. “And now let the weak say I am strong...”) and especially if the song’s climax is in the chorus. This most important phrase will often become the name of the song, or the part people remember.

Dotted rhythms: Including dotted notes creates more liveliness and purpose, as in “The Emperor Napoleon had twenty thousand men” (alias the rousing “John Brown’s body”). If you sing it with all the shorter notes the same length, you’ll notice it loses urgency.

This rhythm can be inserted where appropriate when you’ve composed a string of 1-count or ½-count notes that need a bit of rhythmic relief.

Reading the lyrics aloud, your voice will know when two adjacent syllables have one that deserves to be prolonged while the next could be shortened, eg. “s-h-a-king, br-ea-king, f-o-a-ming waves” while some might do with the shortest note first eg. “hap-p-e-e chap-p-e-e”.

These are called dotted rhythms because adding a dot after a musical note increases it by 50 per cent, thus halving the value of the next. Try to find occasion to treat a word thus, especially if it has a vowel at the end of the first syllable that carries well, e.g. “ho – ly.”

(Part Eight due out Feb-Mar 2026).



Let’s Celebrate!

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

Congratulations to Tauranga Christian Writers for the release of *What we saw at Christmas, an Advent Story*.

Congratulations to Leanne Minton for the release of *London Longings* – a memoir.

Congratulations to Jennifer Somervell for the launch of her 10th children’s picture book, *Curly Cat the Acrobat*.

Congratulations to Lorraine Dittrich for the release of *Beloved Children, 40 Daily Devotionals*.

Congratulations to Graham Ashby for the release of *100 Years of Christian Camping*.

Congratulations to John Evan Harris for the release of *The Grumpy Mole gets a Digger*.

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](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/>



Karen McMillan (center) with Spring Seminar attendees

NZ Christian Writers Spring Seminar **27 September 2025**

by Kathryn Paul

During late September NZ Christian Writers held a Spring Seminar in Mt Roskill, Auckland. Our guest speakers were Karen McMillan and Rob Harley.

The seminar began with a devotion brought by the seminar host and NZCW vice president, Janet Fleming. Attendees were able to display their published books and speak to the group about them. For those who couldn't attend, here are some notes from the seminar.



Karen McMillan is the director of NZ Booklovers, and is a published author of 24 books, a mixture of bestselling fiction, non-fiction to inspire and help others, and a children's book series that has been optioned for TV and film. More info at www.karenm.co.nz.

Karen is passionate about book publishing and enjoys working with authors to help them realise their dreams. She was the resident book reviewer on The Cafe, TV3, and she also does book reviews on a variety of radio shows. Karen is the NZ Herald Books Editor.

For NZ Book Lovers Karen reads 2-300 books a year and judges which books are worth reading. Visit [NZ Booklovers](#).

Karen recommends looking into the Publishers Association of NZ: [Home - Publishers Association of New Zealand Inc](#). In their Members Directory you will find a current list of NZ Publishers. She suggests NZ writers focus on the NZ market and become known locally before going overseas.

Karen shared some statistics, she said 87 per cent of New Zealanders read a book a year. An eBook is less popular than paper and audio. Only about 10 per cent of readers read eBooks. Karen described her experience of visiting the world's biggest book fair at Frankfurt.

More people are self-publishing, as it's getting easier to do so. Be aware of an international deal. Watch your expectations. Not all our writing will be accepted as we want.

From the Blitz to the Burmese Jungle and Beyond is a book about an engineer behind the war front. Karen was the ghost writer. As a ghost writer you have to find their voice and not impose your ideas. When writing a book such as *Everyday Strength*, collaboration is good.

Karen recommends looking into: Your Books, Mary Eagan Publishing, Torn Curtain Publishing and Castle Publishing.

Karen introduced her *Quokka Logic and Baking Book* and new series, *Elemental Heroes* with Chrissy Metge for ages 7-12. She shared about writing *Turbulent Threads* which is about Larnach's Castle. She shared her experience of having a writer's residency to gather information for her research.



Kathryn Paul, Janet Fleming, Justin St Vincent



Members' books on display

Rob Harley's website is <https://robharley.co.nz/> and Rob is known for his involvement in NZ media including the television programme, *Assignment*.

Rob said, "Opportunities don't shout... they whisper."

Rob also mentioned the television programme, *Extreme Close Up*.

Below: Rob Harley (centre) with Spring Seminar attendees



Rob said, “We are the first Bible most people read. We are scripture with skin on. Find people on the ‘solution side of life’. It’s not what happens TO us but what happens IN us.

The world needs to hear from wounded healers. We are witnessing while still on the journey. ‘Touch my heart, before you touch my head’.

Jesus is the ‘Ultimate Storyteller’. Stories really ‘get in’ to us. Be a storyteller to become a bridge builder into faith. Find out ‘what is the back story’.



A statistic Rob shared is three per cent of books that get started never get finished.

Rob mentioned using help such as the app *Letterly-* for voice recording, *Designrr* (for creating eBooks), *Describe* (a video and podcast editor), *Ted McGrath* (training that turns your life story into a message that impacts) and *Funneling* which helps with marketing. He said people go on *Google* for aspiration and information.

He recommended using *BookPrint*. He reminded us to ‘map your story’.

People are looking to meet a need or are aspiring. Rob has made available to us a 24-page guide, *So You Want to Write a Book*.

Grace Bell Publishing

by Justine Grayson

I'm excited to introduce **Grace Bell Publishing (GBP)**, a newly established (est. 2025) Australian Christian publishing company founded by a former Aussie literary agent. Our mission is simple: to publish *books of light*—stories that uplift, inspire, and reflect God's grace. We want to encourage hearts, stir imaginations, and shine truth through every book.

As a former literary agent, I've always loved working with authors and illustrators. Books are the best! My heart is to see more local Christian books available in our part of the world, but I'll be honest, launching a new publishing business is slightly nerve-racking, and margins in publishing are quite tight. I'm thankful that GBP is blessed with a wonderful distributor, Woodslane, which distributes our books to both Australia and New Zealand. I would greatly appreciate your prayers for GBP.

Our focus will be **fiction**, with more details available on our website submissions page: gracebellpublishing.com.au/pages/submissions.

Writing tip: Read widely in your genre and look for gaps in the market.

At the moment, I'm especially keen to connect with **picture book illustrators**, and an **Easter picture book manuscript** is right at the top of my wish list. Also, if you have any questions, please feel free to get in touch via our website.

If you'd like to connect with us on social media, here are the links:

Instagram - <https://www.instagram.com/gracebellpublishing/>

Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/people/Grace-Bell-Publishing/61576096498190/>

All my best, Justine



YOUR Health YOUR Choice

by Kelly Cochran

Romans 12:1 *I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a **living sacrifice holy** and acceptable to God which is your reasonable service. And **DO NOT** be **CONFORMED** to this world, but be **transformed** by the **renewing** of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and perfect will of God.*

Our health is a lifestyle full of choices we make every day. We underestimate the impact our choices make in the world within us and around us. We are triune beings made in the likeness of our eternal creator, Yahweh/Yeshua-Messiah/Ruach Hakodesh. We are triune beings created as an immortal spirit/soul/body – intricately made (Psalm 139). The way we treat, nurture and nourish ourselves, impacts the way we live, breathe and play.

Your Health is Your Choice!!!!

What does it mean to nurture and nourish our immortal spirits, our soul and our body? If we saw ourselves as temples of the Holy Spirit how differently would we look after ourselves? We all have three main spiritual gates: 1/Eye gate, 2/Ear gate, and 3/Mouth gate. What we sow into ourselves comes out in the way of bad fruit (all the negative energy) or good fruit (all the positive energy). If we are truly caring for our spirit, soul and body, we would be super considerate of what we allow into these gates. What we can consider and think about when considering these gates are:

1/Eye gate: What films, movies, television series and adverts are we watching? What books, magazines and newspapers are we reading? What are we looking at on social media and internet? Is it edifying? Is it encouraging? Is it helping to heal or hurt our spirit?

2/ Ear gate: What are we listening to such as radio stations, music and audio books? What conversations are you getting involved in? Is it gossip? Is it edifying? Is it uplifting? Is it challenging us to go higher in Christ? Are our relationships lifting each other up or tearing each other apart and what are we doing about those relationships? Are you able to listen to considerate and constructive criticism?

Other considerations: Are there negative behaviors/patterns that are the result of generational curses, possibly from freemasonry/antisemitism? What clubs are you involved in? Are they building life skills and taking you higher in Christ?

Gate of 'Dis': dishonor, disguise, dishonesty, disrespect, disregard, disobedience, disappointment, disgrace, disconnection, discouragement, distrust, disinterest, displacement and disorder. Self-reflection – are any of these words influencing your life? How and what are you going to do about it? Do you have healthy boundaries with your relationships? Do you know what healthy boundaries look like for your life?

3/Mouth/physical gate: What are we putting into our bodies? Do we truly know the effect of food, chemicals, medications, drugs, alcohol and do we know the ingredients and how they affect our bodies? If we are stressed, gluten and dairy if highly processed can have inflammatory effects on our body. Sugar is likened to having the same effects on our brain as cocaine. Addictions are real and harm our bodies considerably. They come in different forms such as work, food, drugs (medical or non-medical), physical exercise, sports, alcohol... the question is have any of these become a god and has Jesus lost center-place in our hearts?

Are we allowing ourselves to rest? Are we allowing ourselves to play and have fun? Are our lives full of the abundant love, joy and peace no matter what, which Yeshua talked about? If not, why not? Can we be still and really know that Yahweh is our God?

In conclusion we are intricately made and YOUR HEALTH IS YOUR CHOICE.

Resources:

First and foremost, Jesus.
My experience and the many books I've read.
Elijah House Ministries NZ and USA

Professional Writing Services

Are you a subscriber who can offer a professional service related to writing or publishing? If so, you are welcome to advertise here for FREE. Send your advertisement of 100 words maximum to: editor@nzchristianwriters.org

A WORD ABOUT EDITING

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

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

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

Graham Pedersen: 027 440 5851

E: gpedersen@hotmail.co.nz

CASTLE PUBLISHING

Christian and Family publishing services in New Zealand.

<http://www.castlepublishing.co.nz/>

CAVIT ENTERPRISES

Proofreading and Copyediting Services

I offer assistance to enable your manuscript to be free of annoying mistakes, repetitions, wordiness, etc, so that it can be sent to a publisher as a 'clean' document.

Most genres considered.

Fees to fit your budget.

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):

021 238 9234

E: christel.jeffs@yahoo.com

KIN & KINGDOMS BOOKS/ SELF PUBLISHING INSTITUTE OF NZ

Got a question about writing a book or self-publishing? Angela has multiple best-selling books and has become a formidable presence in the realms of literature and publishing.

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Angela Curtis

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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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Colleen Kaluza

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Visit <http://wordwyze.nz>

WRITING ANSWERS

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

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

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

Janette Busch

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Any questions?



Look, Like, Love.

by Eion Field

Words are, I think, a lovely gift. They offer us a special lift.
For writing poetry or song, the resource list of words is long.
Five hundred thousand at a guess; maybe a million, more or less. . .
But can there be more high reward than writing words to serve the Lord?
The Bible is the poet's friend. How much true insight does it lend?
The contents of the holy book are treasures if we'll only look.
And with the Holy Spirit's stamp, the Word becomes a shining lamp.
A light along a darkened road, a strength to bear a heavy load.
Riches to help us meet the cost, sure hope for any who seem lost.
Dividing, like a two-edged knife, truth from falsehood, death from life.
Confirming simple faith indeed, and trust – to follow Jesus' lead.
For Jesus is the great "I Am", the Lamb of God. He IS the Lamb;
Fulfilment of the promise made, who once was in a manger laid.

From judgement farcical and rash, to taunts and scorn and dreaded lash,
He bore our sins upon the cross, He compensated for our loss.
But though the cross He'd not survive, within three days they found Him live!
They surely did, make no mistake; He served them breakfast by the lake. . .
Jesus broke the "bars of iron". Rose with strength, that of a lion.
Now lives and stretches out His hand to give this news to every land.
The Word has opened heaven's gate, and bids us enter, soon or late.
It isn't some implied rebuke; see Matthew, Mark or John – or Luke.
Go straight, be kind, repent, forgive; on every day for Jesus live,
And know our gracious God above surrounds us with His mighty love.

Interesting Fact:

DEADLINE by Kathryn Paul

Did you know the word *deadline* originated from a term in prison, where if a prisoner crossed a certain boundary line, he/she would be shot? The term gradually became used to mean 'run out of time' such as for newspapers going to press. In the writing world, a deadline must be treated with a great deal of respect. If you miss the deadline for a competition entry, for example, there's no leniency.

How can you help yourself remember deadlines? One way is by using the calendar app on your mobile phone. You can create an event on the calendar and set it up to alert you on a specific day and at a specific time. This can be used to remind you before a deadline arrives, before it's too late.



Making the Most of your Membership

by Kathryn Paul

So, you're a member of NZ Christian Writers—awesome—great move! You'll receive the magazines, *The Christian Writer* and *Young Christian Writer* by email and if you've subscribed to the printed issue, also by post. Now—how can you make the most of your membership?

Here are some bullet points to help you get the best out of NZCW membership:

- Read the NZCW emails so you don't miss out on helpful information and upcoming events.
- While reading the magazines, take note of articles and advertising that are relevant to you or that may be helpful in the future. Also, read past issues.
- Have a go at entering the writing competitions as this doubles as a mentor system. Every contestant receives private feedback from the judges. You might win a prize but more importantly you will challenge yourself and grow your writing ability.
- To find out who else has published in the genre in which you are writing and wanting to get published, check out our Members' Books Catalogue and search the categories. You could consider purchasing their book/s to see how they have presented their work.
- Have a go at writing contributions for the magazines. We accept poetry, articles, devotions, short stories and more. If you enjoy encouraging and writing for youth, send a submission suitable for *Young Christian Writer* magazine.
- Find out where your closest local Christian Writers group is, go along and connect with other writers. If it's a distance to travel, consider inviting someone to go with you and carpool. (Our Northland group has attendees driving down from the Far North and up from the 'South North' (Kaipara) to the 'Middle North' (Whangarei) for meetings. When you carpool, you can enjoy more connection and fellowship.
- If you're too far away from a current group and feel isolated, consider starting a local group where you are, then tell others about it. You may be surprised at how many Christian writers there are in the community around you, who you didn't know about.
- Keep an eye out for Christian writer events such as retreats, seminars and book launches. Go along to support the event and while you're there observe and learn from how it's being done, to help prepare for when you're ready to run an event of your own.
- Remember we have a website where you can showcase your writer-bio and any published books you have. Share the link to your webpage there in your emails, especially if you don't have an author website of your own.

- Remember to look for opportunities to encourage and support other Christian writers. When we 'give out' we tend to feel more satisfied, compared to if we are only looking to take or receive something. Be the kind of encourager to others that you want people to be in your life.
- Connect with other writers and start conversations in our NZCW Facebook group. It's a great place to ask questions.
- Make the most of how NZCW can help promote your published works. Use our magazine and email network to announce your book launch or marketing events. Send reports and photos after an event to share in the magazine.
- If you've been a member for over two years and you're passionate about NZCW, consider joining the NZCW Board. You're welcome to attend a meeting and check it out.

Shame

by Nicky J Sims

Red faced
 Heat rising
 Uncomfortable and exposed
 Deep hole not big enough to hide in
 Hide, until spectators look away
 I am nothing
 Yet I am seen
 Useless
 Wrong
 Infectious
 People stay away
 Shame lingers like a weeping sore

Yet there is hope
 I reach up to the One who will take hold of
 me
 He gently pulls me out of the hole.
 He has already put to death my shame
 It is not mine to have any longer
 I am someone
 I am seen
 Favoured
 Righteous
 Welcome
 Jesus stays close
 The sore is healing

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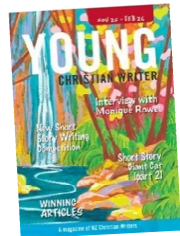
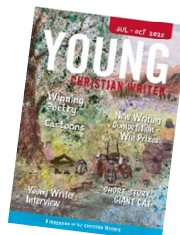
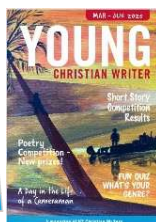
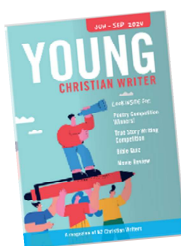
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Join the NZ Christian Writers Group on Facebook

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

Young Christian Writer magazine is out now. Sign up for a **FREE** digital subscription today! (Note this special free offer doesn't include *The Christian Writer*.) We now have over fifty free subscribers! This offer is great for classrooms and homeschooling families. Click here to sign up to *Young Christian Writer*: <http://eepurl.com/hSQOhX>



A Christmas Sestina

by Lesley Edgeler

Miraculous and holy—this new Babe
Full of wonder—this miracle Boy
The message given by the angel
Of the coming glorious birth
Bringing forth a Saviour
By a young Mother—truly unexpected

Mary—visited by an angel
Was told about the forthcoming birth
For mankind He would be the Saviour
‘How will this be—this unexpected
Child—I’m a virgin—to bring forth a Babe
Let alone a wondrous little Boy?’

“For He will be the Saviour
Born to die—Messiah—this Boy
All will kneel before Him—so unexpected
And confess Him as Lord—this Babe
You’ll rejoice at His timely birth.’
Mary knelt in wonder—said ‘Yes’ to the angel

A census in Bethlehem—unexpected
Mary pondered greetings from the angel
Who’d announced this unusual birth
Of the world’s amazing Saviour
No room at the inn for this new little Boy
Born in a manger—our Holy Babe

In the City of David—a heavenly Boy
Christ the Lord, Messiah, Saviour
Immanuel, God with us, this new Babe
‘Good tidings of great joy’ from the angel
After angel chorus sang about the
unexpected
Shepherds came to rejoice at the glorious
birth

Wise men heard about this birth
Gold, frankincense and myrrh signified the
unexpected

Gifts for the little Boy
The Son of God—this Babe
Good news spoken by the angel
Exaltation—heavenly splendour of the
Saviour

‘Celebrate,’ said the angel, ‘the miracle of
birth
Worship the Saviour, the prophesied Babe
Hope in the unexpected, this blessed
Boy.’

What is a sestina?

- Six stanzas of six lines each.
- Six theme words.
- Each theme word is placed at the end of a different line of each verse.
- An envoi of three lines at the end, each with one theme word in the middle and one at the end of the line.

Can you pick out Lesley’s Christmas theme words in her sestina? Have a go at writing a sestina yourself and feel free to send it in to the magazine.



Meeting on the Mountain

by Geraldine Crow

Rhubarb patches of light
Blush steep ridges
And colour the mountain top
Where I sit.
Below me, multiple grey dots
Of sheep resting in dew drenched pasture,
Turn white,
As sunshine greens up the folded contours of hills
Stretched out beyond me.
A lamb approaches,
His wool blazing with fire,
And in his eyes, I see
The substance of the universe,
Swirling.
Joy rises into my mouth,
And forms a song of hope and longing,
Released from my innermost being.
I sing with the lamb
Until I find myself
Carried in His arms,
Guided by His love and protection.
Together, we descend the mountain,
And I am captivated
By the lamb that was slain
With the spiral universe
Swirling in His eyes.



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.

Honouring Faithful Servants

Celebrating Over 30 Years
of the Christchurch Branch of NZ Christian Writers
by Verna McFelin and Dave Palmer



On Thursday, 19 September, a group of enthusiastic writers and long-time supporters gathered in Christchurch for a very special occasion, to honour **Dave Palmer** and **Janette Busch** for their more than **30 years of faithful service** to the NZ Christian Writers Christchurch Branch. It was an afternoon filled with warmth, gratitude, laughter and storytelling. As memories were shared, it became clear that what started as a small group of writers meeting in a living room had grown into something deeply significant; a spiritual and creative legacy that has touched countless lives.

The Humble Beginnings

Dave Palmer shared the story of how it all began. “In 1994,” he recalled, “my friend Beth Walker visited me with a proposal to start a Christchurch branch of the New Zealand Christian Writers’ Guild, as it was known back then. Beth, who served on the national committee, had a heart for establishing local groups and what better place to begin than her hometown?”

Beth connected with fellow member Lois Fechny, and soon a small gathering was organised at Lois’s home on New Year’s Eve, 31 December 1994. Those present, Lois, Beth, Lois’s daughter Donna Wright, Elspeth Hope-Walker, and Dave, could not have known that their meeting that day would spark a movement that would still be alive over three decades later.

Lois shared that God had already shown her a vision of holding a meeting in her home and she quickly realised, this was it. From 1994 to the late 1990s, Lois and her husband Graeme graciously hosted the group in their home on Pentre Terrace, overlooking the city.

By then, a dedicated core of writers had formed, most of them women, who met faithfully to pray, write and encourage one another. “After prayer and sometimes worship,” Dave said, “we would then share any published work, then move into evaluation. We laid our writings on a table with feedback sheets for others to comment on. It was a gentle, thoughtful process that helped us all grow.”

Beth Walker even created a detailed evaluation guide, teaching the group to give helpful and specific feedback, something that became a hallmark of the Christchurch branch.

A Flourishing Community

Through the years, the Christchurch group thrived. Members began entering national writing competitions; and winning! The fellowship deepened, and many new friendships were formed over shared words and cups of tea.

When Lois stepped down around 1999, Debbie Prescott hosted the group in Woolston, where a young Janette Busch attended her very first meeting. Around that time, the group began inviting local Christian authors to speak, including Sister Pauline O’Regan, whose work in Aranui was well known.

From 2000 to 2003, Dave also led a writers’ group in Rangiora, while the Christchurch branch continued to grow. For several years, they hosted weekend retreats at Sister Eveleen Retreat House in Scarborough, where God’s presence was felt strongly among the attendees.

When the group later moved to Forfar Courts Community Centre, Dave “was volunteered” to lead the meetings, a role he embraced faithfully for many years. The fellowship expanded to include men like Nigel Young, Douglas Mac Valley (a retired motorcycle “globe-of-death” rider!), and Errol Brathwaite, an acclaimed author and WWII veteran who humbly encouraged the group’s budding writers.

Workshops and seminars followed, including one memorable event in 2002 titled *Getting the Word Out*, featuring John Lindsay, who would go on to become a treasured member of the group for over two decades.

Seasons of Growth and Change

In 2003, the meetings shifted once more, this time to Janette’s home in St Martins Road, where they remained for many years. There, a steady rhythm of fellowship, writing and visiting speakers continued. Dave would often visit local Christian bookstores to find authors to invite, among them Anne Walker, Liz Hollister, and Kathleen Keith-Gillon, whose testimonies and books inspired many.

The Christchurch branch also had its share of remarkable members, including Melissa Parsons, whose book *Rubble to Resurrection* chronicled the response of over 200 churches after the Canterbury earthquakes. Sadly, Melissa passed away not long after the book’s publication, but her legacy remains.

Long-time members Fred and Marcia Baker, Lois Farrow, Jean Shewan, and many others brought their wisdom, faith, and stories to the group, enriching its collective heart.

And then there was Beth Walker, who faithfully returned every Christmas from Auckland, compiling beautiful albums of photos, writing samples, and memories, a treasured record of the group's journey. Although Beth went to be with the Lord in 2023, her work continues to bless and remind us of how God uses small beginnings for great purposes.

Continuing the Legacy

In more recent years, the group welcomed new members, including Pauline Marshall, Verna McFelin, Alison Cross, and others who brought new energy and vision. The Christchurch branch also partnered with the South Island Christian Book Authors Network (SICBAN), founded by Verna, to further support authors working toward publication.



Seminars led by George Bryant on publishing and Staci McLean on social media and public speaking have also inspired and equipped local writers.

Dave reflected, “We’ve moved away from just evaluating writing to supporting each other in our writing journeys and that change has had my full support. Although I don’t have projects of my own these days, my joy has been in seeing others grow in their calling.”

A Celebration of Faithfulness

The September gathering was more than just a celebration, it was a recognition of faithfulness, community and the quiet endurance of those who have sown into the lives of others. Through earthquakes, relocations and seasons of change, the Christchurch branch has remained a living testament to the power of shared creativity and the Spirit of God at work through words.

As Dave concluded, “The group may or may not continue in its current form, but God isn’t done. His people never stop writing His story.” Indeed, what began with a handful of writers and a shared dream in 1994 has become a lasting legacy, a light for Christian writers across the South Island and beyond.

“Well done, good and faithful servants.”

Thank you, Dave Palmer and Janette Busch, for your decades of leadership, encouragement, and steadfast devotion to NZ Christian Writers.

Morning Chorus

by Maureen Tearle

I rose this morning and listened to the birds, starting
their morning chorus

of praise, one at a time and then the symphony
began,

giving thanks for the start of a new day
the tuis, the thrush, the starlings, all joined in the
chorus, an orchestra of love,

of joy, before going about their day
I watched the kingfisher alight, on his usual perch,
the swallows dart to and fro,
the sparrows in the eaves start to twitter, the quail start their call.



I slowly walk along the track, gazing up at the stately gums,
with whitewashed trunks, swaying and chattering in the breeze
I admire and touch the ferns, the manuka, growing each side of the track,
a beautiful koru unravels itself into a tall upright ponga,
majestic and beautiful, so true and proud
I marvel at the ingenuity of all the creation
the lancewood with its jagged leaves surging in growth, protecting its youth
the tiny pink buds of the manuka, I marvel at the delicate pale pink flowers
the towai, the pukatea, rimu, totara, rata, so majestic and tall,
no wonder all the birds abound in the leafy foliage.

I am thinking, maybe just looking and listening, sensing
is the real work of my heart, as I marvel
my senses are alert as I take it all in, seeing the beauty,
touching the leaves, gazing in awe at the stately trees,
hearing the trill, the warble of the grey warbler, the tui, the tiny tomtit
the parakeets screeching, the beautiful pheasant flies away in distress,
squawking

I smell the fragrance, leaving a taste of delight, feeling so blessed to be a part of this
creation, God's world, His delight is my own.

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

David Sanders

Auckland

Lisa Waghorn

Waikato

Peter Mitchell

Christchurch

Sherilyn Wong

Palmerston North

Teri Kempe

Tauranga



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

president@nzchristianwriters.org

I didn't see that Coming!

by Clive McKegg

Well, I didn't see that coming
That was really quite a knock
A bolt right out of clear blue sky
It gave me an awful shock!

I didn't see that coming
A total twist of plot!
Just when I had life figured out
It seems that I did not!

I didn't see that coming
But looking back I now find
That if my eyes were open
I would not have been so blind

I didn't see it coming
But now with hindsight
If I'd listened to all the warnings
I may have got it right

I didn't see it coming
But maybe next time I will
Or maybe it will be a different surprise
Just over the next hill

I didn't see it coming
But I'm sure Jesus did
It didn't take him by surprise
Just this wayward kid!

I didn't see it coming
And maybe I never will
But perhaps with his help
I can turn a threat into a thrill!

*Proverbs 27:1 Do not boast about
tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring.*

Christmas Juxtaposed

by Colleen Kaluza

Some years ago, while home-educating my children, we decided to do a study on Christmas and its origins. We discovered that so many of the traditions associated with this festival are indeed steeped in pagan origins. The more we studied, the less comfortable we became with continuing to celebrate it.

We started thinking about when Jesus might really have been born, and our research took us to the time around the Feast of Tabernacles which commemorates God living among His people. We had already been introduced to celebrating Passover instead of Easter, and discovered amazing depth and symbolism in that feast, so we started looking at the other feasts that God had given to the Israelites.

My husband's first argument was, "We're not Jewish." And he's right! But then the feasts are not Jewish either; they are God's feasts appointed by HIM. The next argument was that they were given to the Israelites, not to us as Gentile Believers. But the more I studied God's Word, the more I realised how much we miss because we don't understand and are not taught the biblical feasts and how they ALL point to Jesus! These feasts were kept by the early believers and taught to all new Gentile converts. It was only in the late 4th century, that Christmas was brought in, and even later before the rest of the Christian world adopted it.

One of the amazing things we learned about the seven biblical feasts that God commanded the Israelites to keep, is that they form the framework of a Hebrew wedding!

First, the groom-to-be has a meal with his intended bride (the Passover meal). He offers her a glass of wine, and if she accepts, they are considered betrothed (engaged). He then has to pay the bride-price (crucifixion). Thereafter, he goes away to prepare a room for his bride. (Jesus says these words to his disciples in John 14:2-3) He may not return to his bride until that room is ready, and only his father can declare it ready, so the groom and bride don't know when he will return for her. (Matthew 24:36) When he does return, there is a trumpet blast (Feast of Trumpets) and the whole village rejoices. There is then a week-long celebration. (Feast of Tabernacles - Christ's return for His Bride). A more detailed description can be found here: <https://www.rapturebibletruth.com/ancient-jewish-wedding-customs--jesus-christ-his-bride-the-church.html>

We started transitioning away from Christmas by switching to Hanukkah (Feast of Dedication), as it is usually very close to Christmas. It is a festival that commemorates a miracle God performed for the Maccabees when they ousted the Greeks and rededicated the temple to God. God made one day's worth of oil burn for eight days until they had enough new oil to rededicate the temple. It is also a feast that Jesus honoured (John 10:22), although it is not a feast *commanded* by God to keep. Each evening (this feast lasts eight days), we light one more candle and read Scripture that points to Jesus being the Light, and eventually, passing that baton on to us to be the Light to the world, as He lives in us.

This has been a journey for us and we are not saying that it is 'sinful' to celebrate Christmas. But I would certainly like to encourage you to look deeper into the feasts!

Home is...

by Vivienne Ball

My people will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest. (Isaiah 32:18 NIV Bible)

What places have been home for you? The home you grew up in, places where you had special holidays, an area where you feel is your place? Or is it being with the people you care about? Or that sense of being in the right place at the right time and carrying out an activity that has real meaning.

I look out my window at the bush – today there is no wind and there is a stillness that speaks in its quiet way to me – of trees that have grown for over forty years. Cabbage trees, ngaio, kowhai, rangiora plants, kawakawa, all attracting the kereru, tui, blackbirds and fantails. Trees given to us by friends when we first moved here, some brought up by my parents from Canterbury, on our first wedding anniversary.

I have the memory of my dear in-laws visiting, seeing our new home and buying tools for the garden – the spade I still use. There are other memories of enjoying the shade of the trees and being with people; of putting my new baby in the pram to sleep outside; of children playing.

The outdoors has always been home for me. Growing up on a farm in mid-Canterbury much time was spent outdoors with the Southern Alps in the distance and in the forest of trees planted by my grandfather. There is a sense of home when I drive along the inland scenic road going from Rakaia Gorge to Fairlie, close to the mountains. This is where my ancestors came to from Scotland and England.

I like the words of the writer, Louisa May Alcott, “the power of finding beauty in the humblest things makes me happy and life lovely.” When we see the beauty around us, we feel at home within, and sense the peace which really is ‘home.’ Maya Angelou, the American poet and memoirist, said “the ache for home lives in all of us, the safe place where we can go as we are and not be questioned.”

We all want to be accepted, wanted, and at home within ourselves.

In the Old Testament book of Isaiah, God promised His people a peaceful habitation and quiet resting place. The Message Bible says, *My people will live in a peaceful neighbourhood, in safe houses, in quiet gardens. Those who have been abandoned, exiled, hurt and living precarious lives will find their true ‘home.* In the New Testament Jesus says, *Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*

Whole lives can be spent looking for ‘home’ and indeed that is part of the journey of life – to find that deep inner sense of quiet.

The world changes but the sense of home is found when we look for it not out there, but in our inner being, in the way we live and give, but most of all when we look to Jesus Christ, who is our true home.



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.

Writing Competitions Prize Winners

Level One		Level Two		Level Three	
Verna McFelin	30	Stephen Douglas	24	Sandy Miller	39
Janet Scantlebury	24	Peter Wilson	15	Elaine Dixon	36
Nicky Sims	18	Prue Francis	12	Robert Prins	24

Congratulations to the above prize winners! Well done to those who have been promoted to the next level: Verna McFelin, Stephen Douglas and Sandy Miller. Also, congratulations to Peter Wilson, who was promoted in June and is now on Level Two and to Sandy Miller and Elaine Dixon who are now promoted to the Honours List.

In each magazine, place getters receive points: 15 points for first, 12 points for second and 9 points for third. At the end of May and November, those with the highest points in Levels One, Two and Three are 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. 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: 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 dialogue so take care to keep taglines to a bare minimum. (400 words)

General Comments

I was pleased to receive eight well-written and thought-provoking entries to this competition. Each entrant presented the arguments for and against celebrating Christmas in the respectful manner one would expect two friends with opposing points of view to demonstrate. After careful consideration, I awarded Verna McFelin First Place for her excellent and creative entry written in a script/play format, Second Place to Janet Scantlebury, and Third Place Equal to Nicky Sims and Selau Ifopo. Congratulations!

Apart from one contestant, each entrant ensured that 90% or more of their entry was in dialogue by keeping taglines and other details to a bare minimum. This, together with the use of contemporary language, caused the conversation between the two friends to flow naturally and at pace. While it is tempting to continually use taglines to show the reader who is speaking, it is far better to use them as little as possible and occasionally insert the name of the person who is being spoken to in the dialogue instead. Another way to differentiate who is speaking would be to make each character's style or manner of speech slightly different. For example, one speaker may habitually call the other Bro while the other may use Mate instead. This is a simple example, but I think it clearly illustrates my point.

*Sadly, one contestant lost out on being awarded a winning place in the competition because her entry was 46 words fewer than the required wordcount of 400. This amounts to 11.5% below this wordcount and—as we only allow a leeway of 5% above or below stipulated wordcounts—I had to deduct valuable marks from her score. **Please note:** This and all the other standard requirements of the competitions are listed at the top of the final page of every issue of *The Christian Writer* magazine, as well as on the Competition Reference sheet that is issued each year, and which is on our website to view. Please do remember to take note of these requirements and ensure you have met them before submitting entries. It is always a pity to deduct marks when the requirements have been overlooked.*

First Place



Verna
McFelin
of Christchurch

The Christmas Debate

James: (smiling excitedly) It's nearly Christmas, Daniel. I can't wait to celebrate the birth of Jesus. It's such a wonderful time to remember God's greatest gift to us.

Daniel: James, you know I respect your excitement, but have you ever considered that Christmas isn't even in the Bible? Nowhere are we commanded to celebrate Christ's birth.

James: (pausing thoughtfully) That's true, but does something have to be explicitly commanded to be good? We see the angels rejoicing at His birth in Luke 2:13-14. If heaven celebrated His coming, why shouldn't we?

Daniel: I understand that, but the date of December 25th has pagan origins. The early church never celebrated Christmas until centuries later. Jeremiah 10:2-4 warns against cutting down trees, decorating them with silver and gold, sounds a lot like Christmas trees to me.

James: But that passage refers to making idols, not trees used as decoration. Besides, just because something was once used in pagan customs doesn't mean we can't redeem it for God's glory. Colossians 2:16 states, we shouldn't let anyone judge us regarding festivals. If we celebrate Christmas to honour Christ, isn't that what matters?

Daniel: (looking concerned) But Jesus said in John 4:24 that we must worship in spirit and truth. If we're blending Christianity with traditions rooted in false worship, isn't that compromising?

James: (thoughtfully) I see your concern, but Romans 14:5-6 says, "One person esteems one day above another, while another esteems every day alike." What matters is that we do it unto the Lord. If I celebrate Christmas with a heart focused on Christ, would not that please Him?

Daniel: What about materialism? People spend money they don't have on gifts. Jesus taught simplicity, yet Christmas has become so commercialised.

James: That's a fair point. Giving isn't wrong. The wise men brought gifts to Jesus in Matthew 2:11. If we give out of love, not obligation or excess, we can reflect God's generosity.

Daniel: I still struggle with it. I want to follow God fully, not human traditions.

James: I respect that. Maybe the key is that we don't impose our convictions on each other. Whether we celebrate or not, it should be done in faith and love.

Daniel: That I can agree with. The most important thing is honouring Christ every day, not just one day of the year.

James: Absolutely. May we both always keep Him at the centre of all we do.

Second Place



Janet
Scantlebury
of Raglan

Christmas Dilemma

"So, the kids were telling me you're not having Christmas this year?"

"Yes, well it's something we've been thinking about for a while."

"Oh, that's a surprise! Do you mind telling me why?"

"Well, it was something we came to after really looking into some of the origins of our Christmas traditions."

"Yes, I heard things like Christmas trees can have non-Christian origins."

"Well, it's not just Christmas trees. Take Santa for example. Is it right to lie to our kids and tell them Santa is real? That whether they're naughty or nice Santa knows all about it? Not to mention the materialism that Santa encourages. Really, it's nothing to do with the true message of Christmas."

“Well, that is so true. Mind you there are some good points about the real St. Nicholas. Did you know he went around helping people, like those three sisters who were impoverished? Apparently, he secretly dropped bags of gold to save them from slavery.”

“Yes well, the real St. Nicholas has been so distorted. It really is a concern. There’s quite a dark side to it too if you look into it.”

“How so?”

“Well in some European countries they have celebrations involving a person called Krampus. This character is really the devil incarnate. Not good.”

“Yes, it does make you think. I didn’t realize that.”

“And also, the date we celebrate Christmas is very close to a Roman festival called Saturnalia. Interestingly enough the festival was known for unrestrained drinking. Doesn’t that sound familiar?”

“Yes, I think you could be on to something. Though I can’t help feeling at least it’s one time of year when people do think about God. They’re looking for Him but just don’t know it somehow. I always found it a time when people were quite open.”

“Yes, but don’t they reach out all through the year, if they’re truly seeking God? And really Christmas shouldn’t be the only time we think of God or celebrate Him.”

“Perhaps you’re right. I just know that as a child growing up in a non-Christian family, Christmas was one time when I was especially aware of the God question.”

“Yes well, I suppose it’s something we must come to ourselves.”

“I think you’re right. At the end of the day, I don’t think God judges us either way. Like the Bible says, we shouldn’t be judged in food or drink or in regard to a holy day.”

“Yes, I think you’re right.”

Third Place Equal



Nicky
Sims
of Whitby,
Porirua

What, again?

Good friends Marcie and Kate are in the city heading out for a catch-up coffee together in late September. Some shops are displaying Christmas advertising and decorations already and Marcie is not impressed.

“Well, here we go again.”

“With what?”

“It’s not even October and Christmas merch is already in the shops.”

“That’s so cool. It gets me excited, something to anticipate. I loved Christmas growing up. All the traditions and family times together. I get taken back to my childhood every year.”

“It’s just that all these bells and whistle trimmings distract from what Christmas really represents. Jesus’ birth. Hello!”

“Some of it is tacky, for sure. But my association is that of celebrating Jesus’ birth. I get reflective when I see my Christmas tree up and the tree lights twinkling in the dark room at night. It’s special to me, and I ponder on the miracle of Jesus’ birth.”

“It’s so pagan. All the decorations and everything make it a tacky marketing campaign. It’s just consumerism and it can take us Christians’ attention away from the ‘reason for the season’ don’t you think?”

“Hmm, nah. I think the association is too strong for me to separate out. The tradition for me to put the Christmas tree up on the first of December and put candles and wreaths around my home help draw me to the expectancy of the day itself. It marks advent.”

“And what about presents? I mean, so much pressure to buy the right presents, and for some family members, they want high ticket gifts.”

“I just love unwrapping gifts at Christmas time. That adds to the magic.”

“I’d rather give a sustainable gift, or a card of affirmation. Still show the love yet move the attention away from the big spending.”

“Actually, I like that idea. Maybe that’s something I can introduce to my family this Christmas. We can buy second hand or make sustainable gifts and still have something nice to open. Yeh, that’s a good compromise.”

“Good for you. I get that Christmas is big for you, but there are simpler ways of marking it.”

“I get ya, it’s easy to go overboard and go big on stuff that becomes the main event instead of Jesus’ birth. It’s finding the right balance, isn’t it? Let’s go get that coffee and on the way, I’ll buy you a bauble for your Christmas tree.”

Third Place Equal



Selau
Ifopo
of Lake Rotoroa,
Tasman

Jesus and Christmas... Separate or Same?

“Shopping for the kids?”

Clorissa looked up to see her smiling friend.

“Oh, hi Amy. Yeah, just trying to choose an affordable Lego set. I think the prices go up every week!”

“Or maybe just around Christmas?”

“Probably... Christmas has become one big commercial opportunity.”

“But we know the real meaning of Christmas, don't we?”

“Yes – though it can seem like it's about decorations, food and presents with Jesus' birth squeezed in. I wish they'd made the celebration of Jesus' birth in a month other than December.”

Amy chuckled. “Clorissa, Jesus is the reason we have Christmas in the first place!”

“I know, I know. It's just that it's such a stressful, expensive time of year that's not really focused on Jesus.”

“Well, yes, it can *seem* like that, and it has become quite commercialised, but I think that the things that happen at Christmas are a great reflection of Jesus' birth.”

“What do you mean?” Clorissa asked, confused. “They're almost separate celebrations nowadays.”

“Perhaps...but think about giving presents. The way people like to give gifts to people we love reflects God's love for us. Love that sent His Son to be born in a stable. And remember the anticipation for Christmas when we were kids? That's like the nation of Israel waiting for the prophesied Messiah. It could also remind us about Jesus' second coming.”

“That sounds nice, but that's not quite what I'm thinking about around Christmas.”

Amy nodded understandingly. “I guess it takes intentionality – otherwise, yes, you do get caught up in all the preparations.”

“So what do you do – in your family, I mean?”

“Well, we just make sure we're reminding each other about what we're celebrating, like through Bible readings or singing Christian carols. Remembering Jesus' birth is what gives our family true joy amidst the stress and busyness.”

Clorissa looked thoughtfully at her friend. “That reminds me of the saying that happiness is found in happenings, but joy is found in Jesus.”

“I agree! You know, the happiness that comes from food and presents doesn't always last very long –”

“– whereas Jesus' birth is our source of the joy we Christians are reminded about every December.”

“So, you think we can keep the celebration of Jesus' birth on the 25th?” Amy enquired teasingly, making Clorissa laugh.

“As long as that's what Christmas is all about!”

Level Two

Judge: Shirley Jamieson

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)

General Comments

Creating an allegory can open the door to previously unexplored worlds for your imagination to play in. It can leap into fantasy, connecting ideas which normally have no common ground in everyday life.

There are three main points to consider as you develop your plot.

First, choose the message you want to convey to your readers. The requirements specify that a biblical truth is to be the central purpose of your story. Your Bible is a treasure trove of inspiration so there will be no shortage of ideas to choose from.

Once you have decided on your message, choose characters and a setting which will springboard it into action.

As always, particularly in a short story, the title and first sentence need to hook the readers' curiosity. In an allegory, the unexpected, along with a touch of reality gives them connection to the characters but also fires their imagination.

Where appropriate, dialogue carries the story along and shows the personality of the characters. It also shows what is important to them, encouraging readers to identify with them.

I was delightfully entertained by the three entries I received this month. They all showed imaginative ways to highlight the biblical truth each one wanted to share.

Judging for placements in the competition was tight.

I awarded Peter Wilson First Place for his story Except a Man be Born Again. Peter wrote an insightful, meaningful and perceptive way of describing the journey to being born into the Kingdom of God. Taking the viewpoint of a baby being born, he told it from the baby's point of view, expressing his thoughts and experiences along the way.

Stephen Douglas and Prue Francis each gained Second Equal.

I loved the imagery in Stephen's story, Lord, Teach Us to Pray. He paints a beautiful tranquil scene of the river flowing from the Mountain of Grace. As I read, I could almost hear the river's whispers as it shared its message of peace. In contrast, Stephen's expressive poem showed the pointless loss of lives in war.

Prue Francis' warm and imaginative story, Transformation, tells of the life of a cicada from the nymph's point of view. I was transported into her personal little world as she described her feelings and experiences of being a cicada. I felt a real connection with that little nymph! Prue showed how God's creation demonstrates that he makes all things new in his time.

Congratulations to all three of you. Well done!

First Place



Peter
Wilson
of New
Plymouth

Except a Man be Born Again Jn.3:3

I have just been told I need to be 'born again'. What do they mean? As I contemplated the seemingly impossible, a strange memory came back to me. The years fled and in a trance like state I recollected a previous happening.

I am in a delightfully warm place; it is so cosy and ever since I have been conscious of my existence I have only been aware of this wonderful, safe place I am in. I have never had to be concerned about anything, I have always been very happy there, everything I needed was supplied but lately something seems a bit unsettled. I feel as if there is a change coming but I'm not sure just what. I have just been all tumbled around and turned upside down. I've kicked and struggled with everything I have but this change I sense seems to be coming regardless of what I do. I anticipate something new, but I fear to leave what I know.

Ooh, now I'm being squeezed and pushed; this has never happened before. It is not nice. The pleasant warm place I have been in is convulsing and squeezing and crushing and I wonder what is happening. My lovely warm enclosure no longer feels so safe. I have never been so pummelled about. I am being wedged into something so very constricting. I am beginning to worry I might be so changed I won't be me anymore. As the pushing and squeezing gets harder and harder I sense a drastic change about to happen.

Whoosh, suddenly my head was free, A whole new experience began to unfold. I was being thrust into an entirely new way of being. Where was my safe warm environment that was so comforting? This is something weird, strange, even frightening.

I found myself in a whole new world where I was grasped by something (I later discovered 'someone') and lifted up. I cried out, something I had never done before and as I did so my entire existence changed. The only way of life I'd ever known was no more; I took a lungful of fresh air and was filled with new life, I was exposed to bright lights, space, noise and people; and then I was given to this divine creature, that I sort of knew, who clasped me in such a lovely warm embrace.

Another sensation I had not experienced before suddenly engulfed me and I needed something to satisfy the hungry feeling I was beginning to experience. I was filled with even more life as I consumed the nourishment from this lovely warm

creature holding me. I was soon surrounded by many more loving, kind people who nurtured me and fed me with such satisfying spiritually nutritious food that gratified the longing I was experiencing. A different kind of warmth was wrapped around me as I slowly became aware of different people and things I had never encountered in my whole existence.

As my trance dissolved. I realised I had experienced a new birth.

Second Place Equal



Stephen
Douglas
of Wellington

Lord, Teach Us to Pray

In a land of ancient times, a river flowed from a mountain called Grace. It flowed strong, wide, and long, offering a life source to countless creatures and to the people who settled its banks. As time passed, the people desired a king, so they selected a tall, handsome young man and made him their king.

But once the young king established himself and became strong, he grew dissatisfied with living by the river which flows from the mountain called Grace. One day, he discussed his idea of expansion with his older advisors, and they supported his idea. Some time later, he gathered his young men, horses, and chariots to train them for combat. One spring morning, his captain instructed them to cross the river to conquer new lands and people.

From ages past to today, many kings and generals have taken their men and women into foreign lands to fight and die—all for glory and fame.

During the newest world conflict, a young lad leads his flock of sheep near the banks of an old river—the one folklore says flows from a mountain called Grace—and stops to rest. While resting, he thinks of his brothers away from home, fighting in a foreign land for an agreement of peace. Then a whispering sound he hears, which seems to come from the river... To be certain, he creeps closer and hears the river clearly sing:

“I am the river which flows from the mountain of Grace.”

He pauses, listening to the river murmuring over and around its stones, as it continues to sing:

“Why do kings send their people to war?”

He listens to more, then notes the words, uttering, “Lord, teach us to pray,” an age-old adage he tends to say.

Back at home, he turns his iPad on and finds the river's lament about the futility of war. He too is disappointed that countries haven't learnt that fighting does not solve the issue of peace. Peace comes through forgiving grace, not bombs and drones.

After some hours, he composes the river's song—

River of Grace

I am the river which flows from the mountain of Grace.

Why do kings and leaders go to war?

*History tells you there have been many wars,
and there are soldiers who die today.*

*Life be brief while history be long. Through all their warring,
humanity still has not learnt to belong.*

I flow from Grace serene, high and wide.

Oh, how humanity longs to flow with an abundance of peace.

Yet they be too blind to see, too deaf to hear, life is for making, not for taking.

Peace and grace I share with you today.

The song becomes a hit and plays worldwide—even in outer space!

And the river still flows today from the mountain called Grace, singing to all who will listen: "Peace and grace I share with you." Yet few have ears to hear, for nations still choose war rather than grace.

"Grace and forgiveness are always a humiliation for the ego."¹

1: Richard Rohr, Centre for Action and Contemplation blog post, titled "The Heresy of Perfection," July 27, 2025

Second Place Equal



Prue
Francis
of New
Plymouth

Transformation

In autumn, Nymphena Hemiptera dropped from a tree to the ground. She craved for the rich, dark earth. Digging with her forelegs, she worked her way intuitively towards the tree's roots, where the smell of the sap was irresistible. It beckoned her downwards, like a feast prepared just for her, an indulgence she knew would sustain her for several years. She felt at home in the comforting world of worms and humus, living in the present and happy with her existence.. The thought of flight never occurred to her.

After a long time, Nymphena felt the faintest stirring, an inexplicable urge to begin moving upwards.

“But why?” she asked herself. “I’ve lived a comfortable life down here.”

Something small and hopeful stirred in her and she began digging with more energy that she thought possible.

“Maybe there is more to life than feeding in the dark,” she mused. “Is this what seeds call birth?”

When she finally emerged from the earth, it was night and she was at first disorientated.

“Have I left one darkness only to find another?” she asked herself.

She glanced up and to her surprise, the world wasn’t completely dark, as her previous world had been. There were glimmers of light etching the sky and one large light casting shadows over the garden. Suddenly, she knew exactly what to do. Climbing the nearest tree, she found ‘footholds’ in the crevices of the bark. The moonlight transformed her pale skin into iridescent flashes of colour. Nymphena climbed, instinct guiding her to a place where she could wait safely.

Soon, her old familiar skin split open, tearing softly in the moonlight. She glowed, reborn and expectant. As she looked in amazement, she saw a replica of her old self. Yet she was something different, a new creature. Her old shell remained, cast off like an old garment she no longer needed. As the first birds announced the coming dawn, Nymphena’s wings quivered. Was she ready to fly?

“Come,” said the sun.

She lifted her wings and rose up into the still morning air. Even as she soared upwards, Nymphena knew she needed to play her part in ensuring that other nymphs like her could continue the great cycle of life. She heard a loud chorus of alluring cicada song. A longing to find a mate urged her to seek out the males of her species and succumb to one special male’s attention. After mating, full of eggs, she was ready to seek out a sheltering place to lay them. She deposited her eggs in a small crack in the bark of an apple tree, knowing that her hours of life were numbered. Soon, her descendants would emerge and follow the same trajectory, landing on the earth and burrowing downwards. She died a few days later.

About the same time, a door burst open in a house at the edge of the garden. Running feet sped across the dew-soaked grass. A boy raced to his favourite tree.

“Look!” he said. “I’ve found a cicada shell.”

“You have!” said his mother. “God makes everything new in his time.”

Level Three

Judge: Julia Martin

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)

General Comments

There seems to be a plethora of award ceremonies nowadays for people from all walks of life who are chosen by judges for seemingly accomplishing worthwhile things that merit public recognition.

Unfortunately, the recipients of such awards aren't always the most deserving role models, and sometimes other people more worthy are passed over. This assignment gives members the opportunity to correct this imbalance and promote someone they consider is worthy of a special award and recognition.

The topic had three simple requirements:

- 1. Name the chosen New Zealander.*
- 2. Explain what they do or have been in involved in.*
- 3. Give reasons why you believe this person deserves an honour's award and public recognition.*

I received six well-written entries, and they covered a wide range of unsung heroes, deemed worthy of recognition. First place went to Sandy Miller for her chosen hero who has worked tirelessly for World Vision in difficult parts of the world. I awarded second place to Robert Prins who chose a married couple whom he claimed could not be separated in the work they have been involved in for most of their lives. Third place equal went to Taylor Foster and Elaine Dixon. My thanks to the other entrants whose entries weren't far behind in points.

First Place



Sandy
Miller
of Auckland

A Life of Compassion in Action

I believe Andy Robinson, who is the Acting Head of Fragile and Developing Contexts, International Partnerships for World Vision New Zealand, is a deserving nominee for an honour's award because he embodies the spirit of humanitarian service. At just 22, he made a life-changing decision to self-fund a volunteer trip to Ethiopia, where he saw children living on the streets amid piles of rubbish. This heartbreaking experience awakened a calling in Andy to serve the world's most vulnerable.

Andy's journey to become the person he is today began in Calcutta, India. Here, he spent time at a hospice washing clothes and bedding for the dying and destitute. He then travelled to Afghanistan, where he gained field experience for two years as an aid worker installing water systems. Andy then relocated to Lebanon at the peak of the Syrian refugee crisis, supporting families by securing essential items such as blankets and fuel to help them endure the harsh winter.

Today, Andy brings three and a half years of experience with World Vision, where he leads emergency response efforts across the same regions he once served—Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Lebanon, and Syria. His role bridges immediate relief with long-term, sustainable solutions, reflecting both strategic leadership and deep compassion.

Andy Robinson exemplifies a life of compassion in action. His unwavering commitment to humanitarian work has impacted countless lives. He represents the very best of New Zealand's values—generosity, courage, and global responsibility. Andy is a powerful reminder of how one individual can make a difference in the world.

Second Place



Robert
Prins
of Auckland East

Ian and Mary Grant

The legacy of Ian and Mary Grant will be seen in New Zealand families for generations to come, whether they are personally honoured in their lifetime or not. The difference they have made serving ordinary Kiwis in everyday families for the last six decades will have a lasting impact for good.

From his early twenties Ian Grant devoted himself to the youth of New Zealand, heading up and growing Youth for Christ and Campus Life clubs all around the country. He and Mary burst onto our television screens in the 1970s with *The Herd*. Drug addicts, street kids and teens of all kinds turned to Christ and had their lives changed through their tireless work.

After 32 years working with young people, the Grants began working with parents in 1993, knowing that parents are the key to changing the next generation. Their unflagging energy was seen in conferences and seminars all around the country, growing great marriages and teaching how to parent with confidence. They established *The Parenting Place* in Greenlane, which continues their work to this day.

The Grants have authored five bestselling books about growing great families, including *Fathers Who Dare, Win*. Their regular encouraging words on radio, television and in print have been an inspiration to tens of thousands of Kiwis.

Even into their eighties, Ian and Mary's presence, advice and enthusiasm are still making an impact on New Zealand families.

Well done, Ian and Mary Grant. We honour you for your devotion, work and service.

Third Place Equal



Taylor
Foster
of Tauranga

A Simple Award for My Mum

It might sound stupid.

It might sound cliché.

But it's the truth.

When I think of someone worthy of a New Zealand honours award, I can't look past my mum. She is the strongest and most loving person I know. Every step of her life has been fraught with challenges. Yet, as she walked through that fire, she emerged refined as gold.

This year alone, she fractured her back twice, injured her feet, had pneumonia and a bowel bleed, went to the hospital, had her tonsils removed, and a tumour burst in her throat. When others may have broken, she stood strong. When others may have doubted God's love, she didn't waver. When others may have grown bitter, she continued to bring joy.

She worked for free with her broken back and helped her parents in every need. She encouraged me through all my doubts and supported her brother when he was lost. She talked to Jesus and shared his thoughts. While her world was dark, she helped others go toward the light

Jesus is written all over her heart, body and mind. He's in every scar and wound, every hug and smile. I am proud to call her Mum and best friend.

So, yes, she deserves public recognition. However, the one thing that will remain is Jesus. His love and pride for his beloved daughter are far better than any award this earth could give. For those come from the Saviour, scorned by others, who received no awards, yet was the greatest man to ever walk the earth.

Third Place Equal



Elaine
Dixon
of Tauranga

A Man with a Servant's Heart

A person who deserves an honours award is my friend Steve. Now in his forties, he was born with an inherited kidney disease, which prematurely took the lives of both his mother and his sister.

This knowledge never stopped Steve from leading a full and productive life. He serves part-time as assistant pastor in a local church of which he is also the treasurer. He loves horses and has served as president and treasurer of riding and show-jumping groups. Most weekends he spent training riders and caring for his own and others' horses. As a single man, he has also welcomed into his flat those who have found themselves homeless for various reasons, including men coming out of prison.

In the midst of his busy life, Steve's health deteriorated. A brain aneurysm was discovered which had to be operated on before he could receive a kidney transplant. There was a fifty-fifty chance of success. While many people prayed, he made a remarkably fast recovery. Then miraculously, soon after starting kidney dialysis, a suitable donor was found and Steve received his long-awaited transplant

While having to take medication for the rest of his life and suffering quite severe side effects, Steve has never complained. He thinks of others, spends time with patients in hospital or in recovery, and continues his pastoral role within the church. Truly he shows what it means to be a Christ-follower. He may not ever receive earthly honours, but one can anticipate the Lord's words, "Well done, good and faithful servant."



Praying for our readers to have a blessed holiday season and new year. Thank you to all who help make NZ Christian Writers a wonderful collective of Christian creatives! With love from the team at NZ Christian Writers.

Competitions for February 2026

Due by 1 January 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: It is New Year's Eve and the clock is about to strike midnight when something unexpected happens. Writing in the first-person point of view, describe the event in detail and in a manner that keeps the reader in suspense until the end of the story. (500 words)

Email entry to Debbie McDermott at level1@nzchristianwriters.org



Debbie

Level Two—for members 16 years old and over

Requirement: Tell a story about a pet you have or have had. Include humour. (450 words)

Email entry to Shirley Jamieson at level2@nzchristianwriters.org

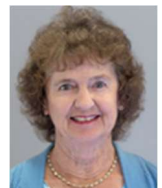


Shirley

Level Three—for members 16 years old and over

Requirement: Write an opinion piece for your local secular newspaper on a current social or moral issue, giving a Christian perspective on the topic without preaching. (300 words maximum)

Email entry to Julia Martin at level3@nzchristianwriters.org



Julia



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

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