

JUNE - JULY 2026

THE CHRISTIAN □ writer

SEE INSIDE FOR

Articles Including:

Elevator Testimonies

Wellington Christian Writers Report

Celebration with George Bryant

Social Media Workshop

When the Door Knocks

Book Reviews:

India Here I Come... There I Go
by Maurice Harvey

My Writing Journey by George Bryant

Shrinking Christianity in NZ
by George Bryant

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 website has helpful information such as event details, member pages and copies of past magazines. Please share our website link with other Christian writers so they can join us.

www.nzchristianwriters.org

President's Report



Dear Members, welcome to our Jun-Jul 2026 edition of *The Christian Writer* magazine. We are now in the exciting season of planning ahead for our Retreat 2027 with NZ Christian Writers. For those who may like to 'Save the Date', please book into your calendars: Thursday 29 April 2027 to Sunday 2 May 2027, at the stunning Flaxmill Retreat Centre in Whitianga. As always, we'll aim for a fully booked retreat experience for all who can attend including inspiring speakers, interactive workshops, a movie night, games night, and talent night. Plus, there will be plenty of opportunities to connect and be encouraged by like-minded writers.

Our retreat attendees often comment on how valuable it is to be connected, equipped, encouraged and inspired at our Retreats. My prayer is that our retreat experiences will be a blessing to all who attend. Once again, non-members, friends and spouses are welcome to join you. It may be worthwhile mentioning that we don't offer a children's programme. Our retreats focus on educating and inspiring, for aspiring emerging and established writers, mainly aged eighteen to eighty. So, save the date and we'll be releasing more details as they get confirmed on our brand-new website.

Speaking of our new website, we are in the fourth and final stage of our website development and this should be available to access online during these months of June and July 2026. We ask and encourage our members to check out the new ability to upload and update your own writer profile and book features if or when you have those available. We'll soon be sharing additional details on how this can be done.

Thank you to all who attended our AGM 2026 on 3 May 2026. Our current board members have been re-elected. I'll be staying on as a board member from September 2026 onwards to help prepare and host our Retreat 2027. Our board greatly appreciate all our members who financially contribute to making NZ Christian Writers a well-established and thriving community. We thank you for your ongoing support for our mission of connecting Christian writers in New Zealand.

Thanks again to member and photographer, Elaine Dixon, for the brilliant photo featured on the front cover of our magazine. As always, write on.

Be blessed

Justin St Vincent

Editorial: Courage to Publish



I'm in the process of self-publishing a children's illustrated book called *GIANT CAT-CHOO!* with teenage illustrator, Samuel Broughton, who is a cartoonist for our *Young Christian Writer* magazine. This has been an exciting, fun and educational project for both of us.

If you've been regularly reading *Young Christian Writer* magazine, you would have been following my three-part serial story, *Giant Cat*. Our book, *GIANT CAT-CHOO!* is a re-write of that story. Samuel is based in the South Island, so we are planning our first book launch to be held there. I'll follow with one later in the North Island.

It's my first time self-publishing since my children's novel, *Dog Tucker*, was traditionally published by Scholastic NZ. During my seven years as magazine editor for NZCW, I've been grateful to observe that many of our members have successfully self-published. Your efforts have helped me have the courage to follow the same route with *GIANT CAT-CHOO!* That's what NZ Christian Writers is all about – encouraging each other along the writing and publishing journey for Jesus.

Years ago, when I attended my first NZ Christian Writers Retreat in Whitianga, one of the guest speakers, Angela Curtis, taught us about the concept of filming a 'book trailer' which is just like a movie trailer. I loved this idea and tucked it away for the future. It turned out that *GIANT CAT-CHOO!*'s illustrator, Samuel Broughton, enjoys making short films and he films his own movie trailers. He was excited to give *GIANT CAT-CHOO!* a book trailer and has filmed it in the South Island. (I confess, I did try to contribute some footage of the police helicopter from South Auckland.) The book trailer will be part of our book launch and will be made available in the future to watch and share.

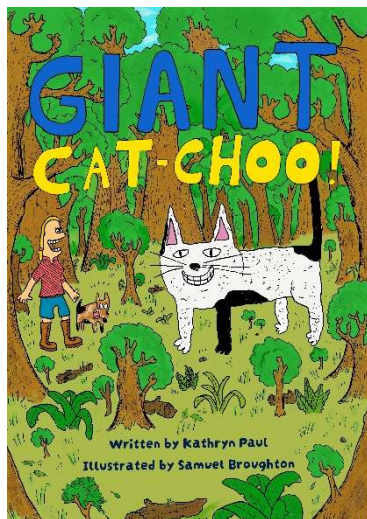
Because BookPrint faithfully serve NZ Christian Writers by printing our magazines, I decided to explore their services for *GIANT CAT-CHOO!* and they have been helpful answering my queries. Keep a GIANT look-out for our new book, coming soon.

P.S. If there's a tip I can give from my self-publishing experience so far, it's don't worry too much about your project being perfect – just do your best and get it out there for Jesus. Have fun doing it and allow Him to take care of the rest. Have courage!

With love in Jesus,

Kathryn Paul

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



Notices

Are you our next NZCW President?

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

Creative Writing/Article Writing Submissions Wanted Please

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

Local Writers Group Leaders Needed – Let's Connect

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

Book Reviews Criteria – Send us Your Book

Members are welcome to request a book review of any of their published books. The main criterion is the book must have some Christian relevancy. For more information on how to have your book reviewed in *The Christian Writer* please refer to page two.

Join the NZ Christian Writers Group on Facebook

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

South Island Christian Book Authors Network

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

Raising Godly Mothers Magazine

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

Warning! Scammer Alert!

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

To locate and read past magazine issues visit www.nzchristianwriters.org/magazines and click on the relevant magazine cover.

AGM MINUTES 2026

NZ CHRISTIAN WRITERS | 43rd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held Online via Zoom Meeting ID: 955 873 6867

On Sunday 3 May 2026, 7:30 pm—8:00 pm

Chairperson: Justin St. Vincent was Chairperson and took the minutes.

Apologies: Janet Fleming, Andrew Stirling, Julia Martin and Christel Jeffs

Minutes: from AGM 2025 read by Justin St. Vincent

The chairperson made a motion that the AGM 2025 Minutes be received.

Moved by: Justin St. Vincent, seconded by: Peter Anderson

Financial Report: received from Andrew Stirling, read by Justin St. Vincent

ASB Balance at 03/05/2026 \$2,678.84. 282 members at present.

The chairperson made a motion that the Financial Report be received.

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

President's Report: read by Justin St. Vincent

The chairperson made a motion that the President's Report be received.

Moved by: Justin St. Vincent, seconded by: Debbie McDermott

Board Update: All Board Members/Officers of NZ Christian Writers to be re-elected.

(Note Justin St. Vincent is acting president until another person volunteers):

Election of Board Members:

President: Justin St. Vincent

Nominated by: Peter Anderson, seconded by: Debbie McDermott

Vice President: Janet Fleming

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

Treasurer: Andrew Stirling

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

Magazine Editor & Membership Secretary: Kathryn Paul

Nominated by: Debbie McDermott, seconded by: Stephen Douglas

Book Reviewer & Level 3 Competition Judge: Julia Martin

Nominated by: Kathryn Paul, seconded by: Debbie McDermott

South Island Representative: Janette Busch

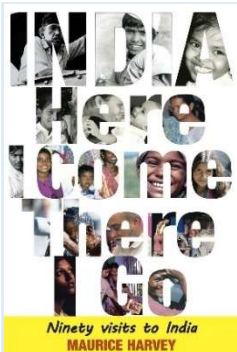
Nominated by: Verna McFelin, seconded by: Debbie McDermott

Board Member: Christel Jeffs

Nominated by: Kathryn Paul, seconded by: Janette Busch

Board members to stand as above.

Close: AGM closed with prayer at 7:58 pm



India Here I Come... There I Go

Ninety Visits to India

By Maurice Harvey

Review by Julia Martin

Self-published 2025

Award winning New Zealand author and photographer, Maurice Harvey, is probably our most widely travelled photojournalist having travelled to 160 countries and territories during his working lifetime.

In this book (his 7th) he focusses on India – the vast and complex country he has visited 90 times between 1960 and 2001. He claims his book is not a travel guide or a critique of India but comprises his personal experiences and observations of a country – now the world’s most populous, which he describes as ‘both powerful and weak, ancient and modern, rich and poor.’

Each chapter deals with a different part of India or a different aspect of life such as their railways, schooling, health care, social classes, and poverty.

Because of Maurice’s numerous visits spanning 40 years, his description of the changes is fascinating – even the rickshaw wallah now has a cell phone!

He recounts conversations with local people who tell their harrowing stories, along with his personal experiences of working for 10 years with the Indian Bible Society, followed by 20 years as the official photojournalist of the United Bible Societies which is the world’s largest publisher. He also spent five years leading a child sponsorship programme.

Maurice includes samples of his photography and also draws on comments from Wikipedia and other social media to bring added up-to-date information for his commentaries.

I recommend this book to anyone who is interested in this fascinating land of contrasts, ‘having the best of the best and the worst of the worst’.

MY WRITING JOURNEY

My Writing Journey

By George Bryant

Hot Tips
From The Files

Review by Julia
Martin

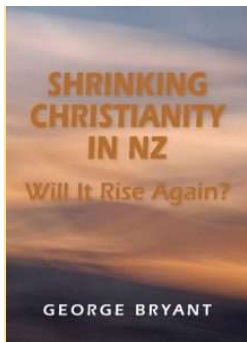
GEORGE BRYANT

Self-published
Revised version 2026

This is George’s personal story about how as a student who hated essays went on to become a prolific writer of 50 books and booklets during the past 50 years. It contains 38 tips for potential writers gleaned from his extensive writing and publishing experience.

This booklet has been widely used as a resource for Christian writers’ seminars which aim ‘to inspire writers to compile powerful and thought-provoking material from a Christian worldview that will make an impact on the community at large’.

I highly recommend this booklet to would-be writers of any genre.



Shrinking Christianity in NZ

By George Bryant

Review by Julia Martin

Self-published 2026

In this somewhat depressing little booklet, George outlines facts and figures that show New Zealand can no longer be regarded as a Christian country. Similar to trends in the Western world, New Zealand is now predominately a secular nation.

The author attempts to explain why the decline has occurred, how our nation has been affected by the 'shrinkage', and what can be done to reverse the trend. 'Will Christianity rise again?' he asks. He then gives clues as to how revival can possibly happen, and how true Christians may be able to have a formative influence on our society once again.

The Power of Testimony

by Kathryn Paul

The scriptures encourage us to share our testimonies, because there is power in them to overcome the spiritual enemy and to help others know the truth about Jesus Christ. For example, check out Rev 12:11 and John 19:35.

If you haven't yet published your testimony for others to access, I encourage you to do so in some way. Following is an opportunity you might like to consider:

Testimonies Wanted!

by Jenny de Vetter

The Northland Christian Writer's Group were given an interesting topic to tackle as a prompt: *Give an 'Elevator Testimony' to a stranger in the time it takes to travel several floors in an elevator.* Our group initially found it hard to condense their testimony, but as they persevered, they really saw the value in this task. As each person read out their testimony to the group, we all understood and appreciated each other so much more.

Our Northland group would like to open up this opportunity to all members of the NZ Christian Writers Groups around the country, to contribute their testimonies for a collection, which will then be put into an e-booklet for distribution to all members.

We have a maximum word count of 150 words and a deadline of 30 June. Could you please email your copy to gwenythfrear@gmail.com.

Following are some of our testimonies for you to read.



Elevator Testimonies from Northland Christian Writers

Jenny de Vetter

I grew up in a family who wanted nothing to do with God. I was a young angry teenager, trying to hurt my parents for what had happened to our family in the past.

A very brave young leader in the youth group I was attending, took up the challenge to break down the walls of rebellion I had put up. He sponsored me to a youth camp run by Youth for Christ.

From the moment I joined the other young people on the bus, heading to the camp in Waikanae, it was as if I had been translated into another realm. During that week, I finally found the God I had been looking for. He was shining out through these amazing young people and He changed me. All the anger left, in a moment of time. I suddenly felt a love for my parents which I had never experienced before. I came home a week later, totally brand new, much to the horror of my parents who despised God.

They forbade me to speak about God in our home and I was forbidden to attend any more church or youth meetings. Their animosity towards God was beyond intense. They threatened me with expulsion from our home if I so much as brought up any conversation with God in it (unless it was blasphemous, that would be fine).

I learnt very early in my Christian walk that it is not what you say that really matters, but how you live your life. After six months of living this new life, my parents saw the change and lifted the restrictions.

I have never contemplated going back to my old way of life. The anger I harboured back then was destroying me. I have been forgiven and God has laid out a new path for me to walk in. He has always walked beside me, helping me walk along my path. I've had my ups and downs, and difficult mountains to climb at times, but I know that I have never had to walk them alone. I know I have a home prepared for me in eternity, so I don't fear what lies in the future.



I am so thankful to my Heavenly Father for lifting me out of the mess I was in and giving me an amazing family and life with a purpose.

Karl Van de Water

"Hiya, third floor is it? Me too. Although, eventually, when my time comes, I'll be going a lot higher".

"Oh, a religious type are you?"

"Well yes, Christian actually, I've come to believe God's word in the Bible, it seems to fit the world I see around me rather well."

"But what about science?"

"Well, I've looked into that, thoroughly in fact; it still stands up."

"Well, good luck to ya mate, might see you on the other side eh?"

"Sure hope so, God bless."

Brian de Vetter

During the first 21 years of my life, I gradually knew a deepening loneliness and sort of lostness; often even when I was in a crowd. I spent a lot of time questioning ‘Who am I?’ ‘Why am I here?’ ‘What’s Life all about?’ ‘There has to be more!’

I had trouble sleeping—even had to take sleeping pills for about two and a half years.

While in Christchurch, in my third year of physio study, I came home on the seventh of September 1971 to a deserted flat. I wanted something to read, but my self-improvement and physio books didn’t enthral me at all. On impulse I went into my flatmate’s room and eventually picked up his New Testament Bible. Taking it back to my room I read most of the Gospel of John. For once I couldn’t have told you what I’d just read, but I knew instinctively that here were the answers I’d been searching for all my life.

My flatmate returned to the flat, which he found unfamiliarly void of Rock music.

“I don’t know what’s just happened?” I said, totally puzzled.

“What do you mean?” he queried.

“I read your Bible, and I have this great peace within me.”

He was speechless and returned to his room. He came back a few minutes later and quietly handed me a little pamphlet entitled, ‘*Four Steps to Peace with God*’. “You may find this helpful at explaining what’s just happened,” then he left me to it.

I read the pamphlet and noted that it said we are all far from God. We were on one side of a bottomless canyon and God was on the other side. I had tried to come to Him in my own way. He wanted me to come to Him through the bridge of the Cross. All we had to do was believe in this comprehensive solution.

I knelt beside my bed and prayed the simple prayer in the pamphlet. Afterwards, a deeper peace settled within me. That evening and till now, 55 years later, I haven’t taken a sleeping pill.

Has my life been all peaches and roses since then? No, it hasn’t, but I no longer have that deep loneliness that use to plague me prior to committing my life to the Lord. I now have Christ living within me continuously. I have a Friend who is always with me. I am so glad I finally listened to Jesus when He called me again.

Gweneth Frear

How I Became a Christian

I was brought up in a devout, very strict Christian home, where the Bible was read aloud twice every day to us children. I was brought up knowing that there was a certain life after death in either of two places... Heaven or Hell! I also knew that I was a wicked little sinner, because I knew what a scheming, disobedient and stubborn little rascal I was in my soul. I was eight years old when I was convicted about doing something about my sin.

When I look at my eight-year-old great-grandchildren, I wonder just how much they are capable of understanding such great matters of eternal life and death. I have to remind myself that I was only eight when these things became a great burden to me.

I knew that I had to confess my sin if I wanted to go to Heaven. But I had the greatest struggle to do this. This conviction was clear and plain to me and I would argue with the voice of God speaking to me, mostly after I went to bed. It was a continual battle.

I would hear the voice of God saying, "You HAVE to do something about it!"

I would answer, "But I don't WANT to!"

I might silence the voices for that night, but they would start up again after a few nights. This kept going on for so long, that one night, I gave in and slipped out of bed and kneeling there I told God that I was sorry for my sin and asked Him to take it away. Oh, the relief!!

I can honestly say I have never had any doubts that my sins are forgiven and that I have my ticket to heaven. But it has not always been a story of happy ever after... I haven't always been what I should have been, and then the contact between me and my Lord has been broken. But He has patiently waited for me to turn back to Him and then has graciously taken me up again.

He will do the same for all those who come to Him... there is a verse that says... *A broken and a contrite heart, O Lord, You will not despise* (Psalm 51:17).

Mavis Glynn

My idea of Heaven when I was younger was simple. God was there. Good people went there when they died. Bad people went to Hell. I was a good person so I'd go to Heaven when I died.

At 38 years old, when my life was a mess, I heard a man share about his life of crime. He'd been a prisoner when admitted to hospital critically ill. At this point I realised I had nursed him then. I listened intently as this man, one I'd seen as evil, shared how Jesus had changed his life—the Jesus I celebrated at Christmas and Easter.

I thought, *If Jesus changed someone bad like him, He could help me – not so bad.* When the man challenged those who wanted this to put up their hand I resisted twice. The third time my arm went up on its own. I looked and thought maybe this is time. I also learned 'no one could go to Heaven but through Jesus', so I needed Jesus. 'All had sinned' – I was one of the 'all'.

I recently shared my story with prisoners. It was not about how good or bad they were, or what they'd done. It was about what Jesus had done. Through Him, their lives could be changed. He may even use them to share His story with 'good people'.



Wellington Christian Writers Report

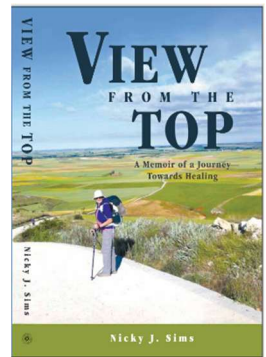
by Stephen Douglas

The Wellington Writers' Group — known as Hutt Valley & Beyond held their first meeting for this year on Saturday, 14 March, from 10 am-12 noon, with the topic 'devotionals'. We were blessed with eight in attendance, one apology and two new attendees which is encouraging.

After morning tea, Ossie spoke to Acts 2 verses 42-47 NIV, noting four activities believers did and do today: the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Next, we shared our achievements and projects currently in progress.

- Nicky announced that after two years she has published her book, *View from the Top— A Memoir of a Journey Toward Healing*; based on her walking the Camino.
- Lorraine is returning to her draft of *Our Identity in Christ* now that she has completed her degree.
- Shirley told us her book *Ripple Effect* is now an audio book in the Blind Low vision Talking Book library.
- Ossie gave us his outline for his next online study material titled *The Answers of Jesus to Job*.



Others indicated the following: busy contributing to their church devotional booklet; compiling life's story from their contributions to the group's monthly writing topics last year; and another is writing poetry. Our around the circle open discussion led to an hour of questions and answers relating to what each is doing.

Three of us then shared our prepared devotional pieces and talked about a simple method of writing a devotional.

1 Begin with a spark: a poem, a photograph, a life moment, or scripture.

2 Anchor the reflection in scripture. Gently encourage the reader/listener to explore the Bible.

3 End by turning the reader/listener towards God. Close with a prayer, phrase or a reflection which encircles an issue with hope and faith.

This year, our theme will be 'My Writing Journey'. Each meeting will feature a pre-selected speaker.

Following are two devotionals written by group members:

Jesus, Light of the World

Devotional by Nicky J. Sims

Psalm 27:1 'The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall, I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?'

The Light is our salvation. The Light casts out fear.

John 1:5 'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.'

The Light shining in the darkness will not be overcome by darkness.

1 John 1:5 'This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.'

Jesus, coming from God, is Light of the world.

John 12:46 'I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.'

The Light brings hope. The Light brings freedom.

Jesus invites us to respond to His light.

1 Peter 2:9 'But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.'

We are His image bearers; therefore, we carry His light.

Matthew 5:14-16 'You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.'

We carry his light to bring hope to a broken world.

Ephesians 5:8 'For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.'

We walk in the freedom the Light of the world gives us, so we can be His agents to see others set free and to walk in the light.

Prayer:

Lord in this dark and fragile world, we proclaim your light. You are the light of the world and in you there is no darkness. We need not be afraid, because we are in you and you are sovereign. We chose to be bearers of your light, bringing hope to the lost. We chose to shine your light in the darkness where you will not be overcome.

A Touch that Heals

Devotional by Vivienne May Ball

Deeply moved, Jesus put out his hand, touched him and said, “I want to, be clean.” Mark 1:41

Have you ever felt a friend’s touch on the shoulder just when you needed it, and do you remember the comfort that brought?

A leper came to Jesus begging to be healed. Jesus was deeply moved and reaching out to the sick and unclean man, he touched him and the healing was instantaneous and miraculous.

Jesus had been praying in a quiet place before dawn when he heard the people were seeking his compassion and healing. He came to them, and his words to the sick, desperate man who knew Jesus could heal, were “I want to.” Jesus wanted to heal the man and he wants to heal us of our uncertainties, fears and dashed hopes.

Psalm 34 says, *‘The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.’*

Nineteenth century preacher, Charles Spurgeon said, *‘When God places a burden upon you, he places his arms underneath you.’*

I remember a dream after I was praying, when Jesus touched me on the shoulder with a loving smile. Jesus took my worries and I carry the memory of that healing touch with me.

What is it you would like to bring to Jesus - what hurt, situation, or concern about a friend or loved one? Remember Jesus does really want to reach out and lovingly touch all who come to him for help.

Prayer: Thank you, loving God, for your Son, Jesus. I bring my concerns to you now, asking for the loving touch of Jesus and for healing in my life.

Amen.



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Click the image to view over 200 NZCW members' books available for sale or go to: www.nzchristianwriters.org/catalogue.

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A WORD ABOUT EDITING

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

In August 1968, while beginning teacher training, Jesus Christ changed my heart and the whole direction of my life. I am passionate about working with Christian writers, helping them polish their work until it shines. I endeavour to read the writer's intentions, not just their words, helping them shape their writing into a more accurate, natural and pleasing form.

Graham Pedersen

Ph: 027 440 5851

E: gpedersen@hotmail.co.nz

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Brian Cavit Dip Edit

E: cavitent@gmail.com

JEFFS EDITING SERVICES

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

Services I offer:

- Manuscript Assessment
- Copy-editing
- Proofreading

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

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

Christel Jeffs (MCW, Dip Ed)

Ph: 021 238 9234

E: christel.jeffs@yahoo.com

STEPPINGSTONE EDITING AND PROOFREADING

I believe you can never have too many proofreaders. Having your manuscript professionally proofread is an essential part of the publishing process and a vital steppingstone of your writing journey. It's a worthwhile investment toward your book achieving positive results.

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

Please email me for information. Let's jump on this steppingstone together.

Kathryn Paul

E: steppingstoneediting@gmail.com

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Colleen Kaluza

E: colleen@wordwyze.nz

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/proofreading.

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

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

Janette Busch

E: WritingAnswers1@gmail.com

or Janette.Busch@gmail.com

CALLED
TO A
SUN-SCORCHED
LAND

Missions to Mozambique



MARY-PAT ROSS

If My Feet Could Talk

by Mary-Pat Ross

Sitting outside basking in the warm sunshine, I prop my left foot up while I sip a morning cup of coffee. As an active person exercising at the local gym, playing pickleball, and riding my e-bike occasionally, I ask myself as a woman in my seventies, *Is this why I have a torn ligament in my foot? Am I overdoing it, exercising this ageing body?* I am thankful my feet are up to the task of taking me on walks along the town's river track, or dashing across the road to the local supermarket for some eggs to bake a cake.

Looking at my foot again, I remember the physiotherapist showed me stretches and exercises to do at home while recommending orthotic inserts for my shoes. *Boohoo, no more jandals!* He also suggested resting the foot. *I wonder if he meant elevating it for 15 minutes while I drink coffee in the sun?*

I am reminded of a delightful series of short stories in Botswana where a main character has shoes that at times talk to her. If my feet could talk about all the places they have taken me, it would fill volumes of books!

Reminiscing of African adventures, I marvel at the durability of my feet, the places they have taken me. I ask them, *Do you remember wading barefoot in the warm surf, blinded by the incredibly bright white sand of the Indian Ocean beach? Then weeks later in high altitude, you wore socks and hiking boots, climbing up the rocky path to the top of Mt Kenya?* What would my feet say, I wonder?

Running to catch a plane, scrambling on the deck of a small yacht heaving in the rough seas, tiptoeing through a bed of tulips, or pushing a pram with my baby son following a concrete path along the waterfront, these are just few of the places my feet have transported me.

Now as I sit in the sunshine, my coffee cup drained, I recall some words in the Bible that speak about bringing the joyful, life changing news of the gospel:

"How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news" (Isaiah 52:7 and Romans 10:15, NIV).

Gazing up at the clouds, I reflect on a lifelong dream now realised: *Go to Africa and help people there.* I bless my feet, these faithful and wonderfully created body parts. I thank God for the places they took me in Mozambique as a missionary teacher, sharing the good news with children and those that came across my path.

Writing a Cinquain Poem

by Christine Platt

I was recently at a retreat and had a go at writing a cinquain (a five-line poem), and I thought it might interest NZ Christian Writers members.

You start with one word, name or title.

On line two: use two adjectives describing the word.

On line three: use three action verbs ending in -ing.

On line four: use a four-word phrase or sentence.

On line five: use one metaphoric word referring back to the title.

This was my effort:

Abundance
Bounty Provision
Overflowing Saturating Blessing
God surrounds His people
Generosity

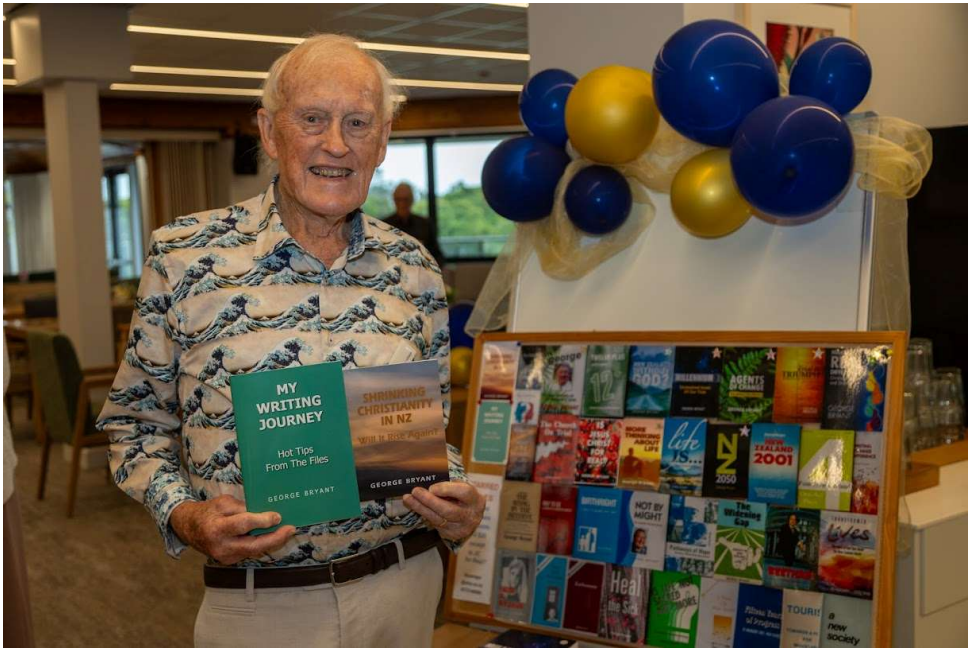
Note from the Editor – Thank you, Christine, I had to immediately have a go at this. Here’s my one below – readers feel free to send me in your cinquains for the next magazine!

Forgiveness
Pardon Grace
Relieving Cleansing Satisfying
Obtained on the cross
Freedom

Publishing – Where Does the Money Go?

by Kathryn Paul

- IT such as internet, computer, software
- Writer (hopefully, eventually, royalties or sales-profits)
- Publisher (if using a traditional one)
- Editor
- Proofreader/s
- Book Designer/s
- Illustrator (if applicable)
- Legal fees
- Typesetter
- Printer
- Couriers for shipping
- Storage
- Advertisers
- Launch costs
- Book Retailers
- Distribution/Marketing
- Accountant
- Administration
- Inland Revenue tax



Celebration with George Bryant

by NZ Christian Writers

Recently, George Bryant (Rev) QSM, JP (Ret.) MA (Hons), DipEd, DipTheol, AFNZIM, ATCL, author, publisher and public speaker, celebrated five decades of writing and publishing. He's now written 50 books and booklets as well as numerous articles. The event was held in Tauranga on 12 April and despite the cyclone warning which occurred that weekend, preventing many from attending, he still had a good turnout of 60 people.

The celebration included Samoan singers and the launch of George's two latest books, *My Writing Journey* and *Shrinking Christianity in New Zealand*.

Here are some excerpts from George's speech:

My journey is proof positive that a pupil who was useless at writing school essays can mature. I guess anything can be achieved if one is motivated and sticks at the task.

I have written about people – their trials and tribulations and their concerns about the way the world is going. I've covered a wide range of topics and no topic has been out of reach.



My books have been a variety of non-fiction. My first journal was for high school English teachers. My first major book was *The Widening Gap* published in 1979 on the topic of the rich or poor gap.

I've written biographies on the lives of numerous people and stories of organisations such as World Vision and Birthright.



My books may not be best-seller material but as long as one person is positively affected and helped – I'm happy. Some of my highlights have been interviews such as a 20-minute interview on Television One and my own interviews with interesting people.

I get my inspiration to write from experiences of life, literature, people I chat with, other authors and my Christian faith. My desire is to influence people for good – to inspire and give hope. It's been an exciting 50 years. Who knows if I'll write anymore books – I've given up prophesying!

Current board members of NZ Christian Writers were unable to attend but we requested the following be read out at George's celebration:



'Good afternoon. I have been asked to read this tribute to George on behalf of the New Zealand Christian Writers Board whose members unfortunately are unable to attend this event today. It is our pleasure and privilege to bring you just a few words to help mark this significant event together with you all. How wonderful it is to be launching George's two brand new fifty-page booklets: *My Writing Journey*, and *Shrinking Christianity: Will It Rise Again?*.

Today we are celebrating George's fifty years of writing and publishing. George is one of our most prolific writers, having published fifty books and booklets, plus many magazine and newspaper articles over the years. In addition, George has helped serve other writers by publishing about fifty books through his publishing company, DayStar Books.

As many of you may know, George Bryant is one of the longest serving members of our collective, New Zealand Christian Writers. To honour his legacy in writing and publishing,

George has been an Honorary Member of ours since October 2016. Being an Honorary Member is awarded to those who have made a significant contribution to New Zealand Christian Writers throughout the years.

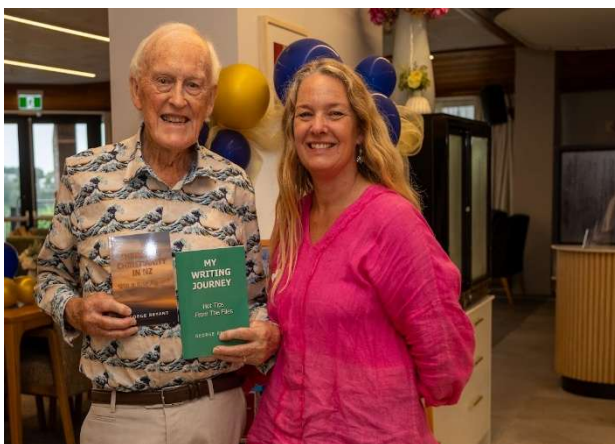
George continues to be one of the greatest advocates and ambassadors for our growing collective. In the early days of New Zealand Christian Writers, George was the main examiner for our writing competitions. He has hosted several writing seminars and workshops in many cities throughout New Zealand, has spoken at several of our meetings and lead our Retreat Sunday service. We are so grateful to you, George and feel honoured to have you connected with our mission of connecting Christian Writers in New Zealand.

Some of the hallmarks of George's writing is that he brings a relatable subject to engage his readers. He is passionate about education, politics, religion and social issues. His books are a testament to the power of writing, conveying ideas and shaping thoughts towards a Christian worldview. George Bryant's brilliant writing journey has been inspired and motivated by a strong belief and faith in Jesus. His faith provides a clear vision and focus for this writing and George continues to be intentional in encouraging and engaging readers to pursue a passionate faith in Jesus.

George, today, we thank you for being a shining light for God's Kingdom. We celebrate you, your writing and your publishing endeavours. May God continue to bless you and inspire you on your writing journey, as we know, it's not over yet! In closing and on behalf of New Zealand Christian Writers, our board members, our President, Justin St. Vincent, our Magazine Editor and Membership Secretary, Kathryn Paul, our Level Three judge, Julia Martin, we thank you George for being a faithful writer who values the word, and His Word.'

Here are some brief comments from others who spoke at George's celebration:

"George's aim is to challenge people to think about life and what's going on around them. In 2019 he was awarded a QSM for his publishing and community work." (Greg Brownless – former mayor of Tauranga.)



George and his daughter, Julia Rae

"A phone call that I received many times over, in the years of my involvement with George, beginning with Daystar Magazine around 2007, was – 'Bernie, it's George – I've got another book underway...'. Many times, he would say, 'this is my last book,' (I think I heard that at least four times) but the creative juices still flowed and the God given inspiration would prevail. Elizabeth and I congratulate you on your achievements over the years and the input you have had into the lives of so many." (Bernard Yeo – Outline Print Consultancy.)



My Journey as a Writer

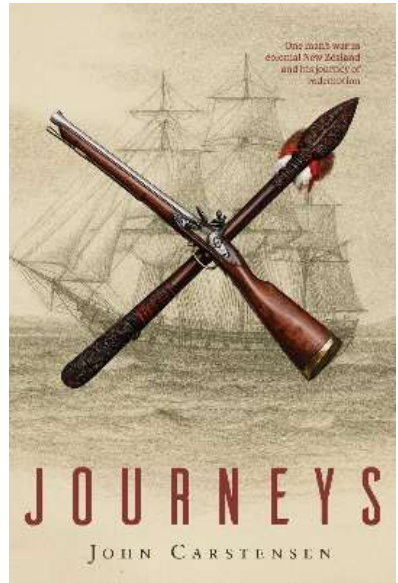
by John Carstensen

I have been a hobby writer for many years. I am an English teacher by profession but am now retired and spending more time writing and indulging my other hobby of fishing. I write mainly literary short fiction and have had stories published in various New Zealand literary journals and magazines; also the Australian magazine *Mindfood*. One of my stories, entitled *Manhunt* is published on the *Mindfood* website and was their most read story of 2025.

I published a collection of short stories in 2019 entitled *The Great Outdoors*. This year, 2026, I published two eBook collections of stories entitled *Stories from Aotearoa New Zealand* and *Stories From Other Countries*. They will be published as paperbacks in the near future, as well as another collection entitled *District 24 and Other Stories of a Christian Genre*. For part of my teaching career, I worked in China and my experience there and in other countries, provided background for stories included in the *Other Countries* collection.

I occasionally write nonfiction—geopolitical commentary from a Christian perspective. I wrote an article for *Israel and Christians Today*, published in the August 2025 issue.

Journeys is my first crack at a full-length novel. I started writing it years ago when I was reading a lot of NZ history, just out of personal interest and let it lie dormant for some time. More recently I turned my reading to research and placed my invented characters into that turbulent period of NZ history in the 1860s and continued my main character's story into the next generation. *Journeys* is fiction but is set against a backdrop of real history. As the back cover text says, 'New Zealand's dark past of colonisation, warfare and betrayal may make for uncomfortable reading, but the protagonist's journey of redemption and faith shines as a beacon of light against that darkness'.



I reside in Tauranga with my wife and we are members of C3 City Church. Our two daughters and their families also live in Tauranga.

Chosen

Prayer by Lesley Edgeler

We did not choose You, Lord God, but You chose us.

When in our mothers' wombs, You already knew that one day we would follow You.

What a privilege to be Your chosen ones—we cannot thank You enough.

In spite of all our faults, all our mistakes, we are Your adopted ones: preferred, favoured, wanted.

How can we thank You?

Words cannot express how deeply we need Your love.

Why us? Why me?

Somewhere, somehow, I was singled out—someone undeserving of Your goodness and unconditional love. Yet, like Peter, You reassured me of Your love—You are not mad at me and You forgive me time and time again.

We sing: *'How Deep the Father's Love for Us'*. Yes, Father, Your love is far beyond measure. It reaches up to the heavens and down to us on earth below – tiny specks seen from outer space, yet, to You we are befriended, loved, encouraged.

Chosen—what a significant word with many connotations.

You know us through and through and still You love us.

Without You, where would we be? Without You, we would be lost. You've saved us for eternity.

'Precious Lord, Take My Hand' another song title. We need You more in this current time of storms, floods and earthquakes; in this time of wars and more wars. Because we know Jesus, You're one and only Son, as our Lord and Saviour, we have peace beyond understanding. We have the assurance of Your unrelenting love.

You don't shun us as the world sometimes does; You don't harm us or turn us away when we turn back to You.

You welcome us back as You did the prodigal son.

'Your Love O Lord is Never Ending'

Lord Jesus, thank You that You were born to die, rise from the dead and ascend to heaven.

Your significance is crucial to our lives.

We love You, treasure You, bow down before You in worship and adoration.

We are so blessed.

Amen.



In Memory of Althea Barr

Althea is pictured with Northland Christian Writers here (third from right in green), sadly she passed away this year. We will miss her positivity, enthusiasm and her input into our lives. Part of her legacy left behind is her poetry, for which we are grateful, as we will always have a part of her when we read her words.

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

Cathy Ogden
Hawera

Joanne Rolston
Wanganui

Pauline Wrigley
Papamoa Beach

Tui Ellison
Auckland

Clive Wilson
Auckland

John Carstensen
Tauranga

Rockey Smith
Palmerston North

Colleen Koolaard
Whakatane

Joyce Callaghan
New Plymouth

Rose Stanley
Auckland

Duncan Munro
Papakura

Marlene Beech
New Plymouth

Sharon Hill
Invercargill

Jeanne Wissing
Wellington

Simone Colwill
Auckland



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

Two Hands

by Stephen Douglas



Two hands are what I
bring today
As I thank You for my life.
Help me to go about blessed
With your Spirit's insight
And hear You affirm I'm your beloved.

Two Hands,
One filled with much to give — and
One open to serve.
Help me know how to use them both
To treat each request with concern.
May I know how to let go of self and
May I treat each breath You give with
grace.

Two Hands,
One filled with much to share — and
One a token of Your care.
Help me to be a blessing, to find
In You the strength to bear
Whatever meets me through this day.
Make me aware my answer
Is already in your care.
Make me sensitive to others
While tending to my own affairs.

Two Hands,
One filled with true love — and
One ready to impart,
Each a symbol of Your loving heart.
Today I bring my hands together and
say:

“May I live to bless and not to curse,
Conscious You created me for this day.
Your will be done upon this Your earth,
As it is in heaven; Holy is your name —
Amen.”

Accept my thanks for all You've done,
My hands were empty and You filled
them.

My Forever Child

by Stephen Douglas

Consider the lily, my child,
how it grows—
it does not toil,
it does not sew,
yet what a story to behold.

So it is with you, my daughter:
each day given anew,
your life unfolding gently,
a story
I am telling through you.

Even the violet,
low and hidden,
quiet in its place,
held within my garden
and known
by my grace.

So too are you, my daughter,
cherished, seen, and known,
a gentle bloom before me,
never left alone.

Flowers fade
and grasses wither,
yet you, my daughter,
you are precious to me;
for you are my forever flower,
planted in eternity.

Each day,
a step to draw you near,
nurtured in love and light,
tended by my Spirit
and my Word,
kept within my sight.

I am weaving
my eternal design in you—
my forever child,
my precious one—
made beautiful
in my time,
according to my fatherly design.

*Inspiration: Ruth Beale speaking about Flowers
in the Bible, Good News Vanners LNI — Anzac
weekend, Ashhurst/Dannevirke rally, 2026.*

Social Media Workshop, presented by Staci McLean

Report by Brian and Jenny de Vetter

Staci McLean is the author of five books that she has self-published. On Saturday 14 March 2026 attendees were treated to a detailed presentation on 'Social Media for Writers'. Staci McLean, the presenter, challenged us with the fact that to get our work into the hands of our target audience, we will need to use social media as well as traditional methods. Below are highlights of her talk. Obviously, this is only a summary.

Social Media has Changed:

- From text to visual and video
- Feeds are driven by algorithms
- Micro communities and niche audiences need to be developed
- Authenticity is more important than perfection
- Paid promotion is more accessible
- AI tools are changing content creations
- In the past you needed large numbers of followers, but now it is more important to 'engage' with your audience

Authors need a Platform through:

- Writing
- Social Media
- Speaking

Social Media Platforms: Staci listed and discussed in detail, many different social media platforms including – Facebook and Instagram (which usually work together), also: Messenger, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest, Snapchat, Goodreads, etc.

Social Media Content that Actually Works should have:-

- Value of content
- Connection with its audience
- Promotion

There was a lively discussion on AI: ChatGP, Capcut, Canva AI and Reclaim

Opportunities to Monetize (to earn something from your efforts)

- Establish Partnerships through Brand collaborations and Book Boxes
- Influencers opportunities – Book promotions, Affiliate links
- Other Income Streams – Speaking, Courses, Paid Newsletters, Patreon-style communities.

The above is in summary form, but the two-hour workshop is a must if we are keen to have people purchase and read our literary efforts. Staci has a very endearing approach and a deep practical knowledge of social media and its importance for writers. We would highly recommend attending any of Staci's workshops on any subject.

Let's Celebrate!

Do you have a writing-related moment to celebrate? Tell us so we can celebrate too.

Congratulations to Geraldine Crow for reaching the end of her first draft of *The Bronze King*.

Congratulations to Duncan Munro who is about to publish a booklet, *YHWH the Trinity. Father/Son/Holy Spirit. Same/Same/Same*.

Congratulations to Kathryn Paul and Samuel Broughton who are releasing in June-July a children's illustrated story, *GIANT CAT-CHOO!*

List of Christian Bookstores in NZ

Adventist Book Centre (Pakuranga & online)

Art in the Villa (Whangarei)

Bible Society NZ (online)

Children's Bible Ministries (Mt Eden & online)

Christian Resource Centre (Mt Roskill & online)

Christian Superstore NZ (Christchurch & online)

Christian Value Books (Christchurch & online)

Church Stores (Ellerslie & online)

Ecclesia Books (Christchurch & online)

Emanuel Books (Manukau)

Epic Books (Christchurch & online)

Evermore Books (Mt Roskill)

Gracebooks NZ (online)

Heartbeat Christian Store (Warkworth)

Living Word Bookcentre (online)

Manna Christian Stores (Albany, Henderson, Manukau, Hamilton, Palmerston North, Lower Hutt, Christchurch, Dunedin & online)

Messengers Bookstore (Hastings & online)

Pleroma Christian Supplies (Hawkes Bay & online)

Pure Books (Timaru & online)

Sonshine Bookcentre (Tauranga & online)

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://www.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/>

Christian Media and Arts Australia:

<https://mediaarts.org.au/>

Christian Broadcasting Association:

<https://cba.org.nz/>

BookTok is a global sub community on

TikTok that focuses on books

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

Peacock Disaster

by Cathy Harris

How often do we put off doing something till tomorrow? We find plenty of excuses like 'the cleaning can wait; I'll just watch this video first'. Or 'I should go and prune those trees, after I've made this coffee'. Then there's the garden that needs weeding, later. 'It will still be there tomorrow, I'm tired today' or 'I have visitors coming'.

My plans for Tuesday were to say goodbye to our visitors, grab a coffee and sit down to try and write a devotional, with a quick prayer sent heavenward. Those plans very quickly went out the window as our guest went to pack the final things in our office. While we had been in the house talking, she had left the door on the office in the adjacent shed open, as we had many times previously, and a juvenile female peacock had decided to explore.

Two thirds of the office is desks and one third is a lounge area with a sofa bed and a large mirror on the wall behind a piano, which I use when I teach singing. On seeing the young adventurous peahen, our visitor stood in the office doorway and screamed. The poor trapped peahen flew in a mad panic at the mirror, sending a glass lamp flying off the piano, landing on the floor and smashing into many pieces. But worse still, feathers and bowel contents were sent flying, spread on the bed, piano, mirror and much in-between. What a stinky mess!! Bravely, I made a grab for the young panicking bird, getting a big handful of feathers and somehow managing to grab the youngster, throwing it out the door, minus a lot of feathers and probably never to be seen again.

The cleaning could no longer be put off till later. Out came the gloves, Dettol disinfectant, vacuum cleaner and the washing machine was filled with the white sheets off the guest's bed, covered in black, tarry, smelly, mess.

How often do we put off reading the Word of God, praying or spending time in worship while we do something else more 'important'? Jesus asked in Matthew 25 verses one to twelve, are we like the five wise virgins who were prepared for the arrival of the bride groom? Or are we like the five foolish virgins who had put off getting ready? Do you put off to tomorrow what we should do today?

An update: at sunset two days after the above incident, a very traumatised, bedraggled, peahen, missing a lot of feathers was seen walking very slowly and carefully through the long grass back towards the cowshed and a safe roosting place.



When the Door Knocks: A Cautionary Tale for Writers in the Digital Age

by Verna McFelin

Not long ago, I received an email many writers dream of. It appeared to come from a respected publishing figure, warm, affirming, full of opportunity. My work had been noticed. A door seemed to be opening. But something didn't sit right.

The email address was Katieloughanane@gmail.com. At a glance it looked legitimate, but one extra letter revealed the truth. Katie Loughnane is the Publishing Director at Pan Macmillan. This wasn't her. I paused and contacted the publisher directly. The reply was clear: it was a scam.

The New Face of Publishing Scams

This experience was echoed at a recent SICBAN meeting. One author shared how he received a professional-looking letter and contract from a so-called publisher, requesting \$7,000 upfront. After checking reviews, he discovered multiple warnings. What looked like opportunity was a costly trap. We were reminded, discern carefully who you partner with.

When Hope Is Targeted

Scams today are sophisticated. They use real names, real companies and convincing language. They target something deeply personal—our calling.

For writers, recognition feels like breakthrough. Scammers know this. I receive multiple approaches each week, including invitations to 'reader groups'.

The Turning Point

These interactions often lead to a request, fees for registration, marketing or features. Some scammers even build trust over several months. They can end up being your 'friend'. They build trust with you.

Be clear; legitimate traditional publishers do not ask for upfront payment or approach authors this way. When money appears unexpectedly, it's a warning.

Wisdom for the Journey

We must walk with wisdom and discernment. Not every open door is from God.

Simple safeguards:

- Check the email domain (no legitimate publisher uses Gmail, Outlook etc)
- Look closely at names
- Never send money
- Don't rush, urgency is a tactic
- Verify through official websites
- Block suspicious contacts

A Call to Writers

If this happens to you, don't feel embarrassed, speak up, share it and report it. You may protect someone else.

Closing Thoughts

As writers, we carry both words and responsibility. Not every invitation is genuine, but when the right door opens, it won't require pressure, deception, or payment.

It will stand in the light.

Verna McFelin is the 'Gathering Organiser' for South Island Christian Book Authors Network (SICBAN).

Note from the NZCW editor – I was scammed this year trying to purchase a Bible! It appeared to be a legitimate Christian organisation. Next time, I'll go to a store!



Join a Writers Group

AUCKLAND NORTH SHORE

Frances Hall

Mob: (021) 643 079

frances@grapevine.org.nz

CHRISTCHURCH

TBC

HAWKES BAY

Debbie McDermott

Mob: (027) 769 2321

deborahmcdee@gmail.com

NELSON

Kay Peterson

Mob: (027) 547 6777

kaypeterson147@gmail.com

NORTHLAND

WHANGAREI

Brian and Jenny de Vetter

jennydevetter@gmail.com

OXFORD

Jennifer Somervell

Mob: (027) 452 9858

info@talesfromthefarm.co.nz

SOUTH ISLAND BOOK AUTHORS NETWORK

Verna McFelin

verna.mcfelin@gmail.com

Join a Writers Group

TARANAKI

Judy Kibby

Mob: (027) 712 4390

judyfeetnshoes@gmail.com

TAURANGA

Cathy Harris

Mob: (027) 235 3919

cathy@blueskydata.co.nz

WAIKATO

Colleen Kaluza

colleen@wordwyze.nz

WELLINGTON

LOWER HUTT – HUTT VALLEY & BEYOND

Stephen Douglas

Mob: (027) 276 2028

cwhuttvalleybeyond@outlook.com

WHAKATANE

Julie Collins

Mob: (027) 261 5572

jacollins1156@gmail.com

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The Impact (or not) of Empty Writing

by Kathryn Paul

In the April-May 2026 issue of *The Christian Writer*, I published an article about the impact of evil writing. The article reminds writers to be careful of how the content of their writing can influence others.

There's another type of writing that I call 'empty writing', which is a missed opportunity to impact, encourage or influence others.

One area I see it in is business writing. I recall receiving emails from a person who I knew as a Christian, acting in their professional career role and I noted how 'cold', 'indifferent' and 'curt' their emails were. Yes, I understand businesspeople or self-employed people are busy and don't have time for 'chit-chat', but still, I couldn't help but think – every email is an opportunity to touch someone's heart in some way. It's not hard to include a quick word of kindness or encouragement.

Have you ever had the experience of after spending a lot of time reading Christian books, jumping back to reading a secular book and found it 'empty'? I find that reading content written by Christian authors that contains a spiritual element of Jesus in some way, has a certain 'warmth' or 'depth' to it. It can feel deeply satisfying. By comparison, worldly writing, including the books I used to read and enjoy when I was young, while still entertaining, now feel lacking, pointless and empty.

As a Christian, I want all my writing wherever possible to count somehow for Jesus. It can be subtle; it doesn't have to be 'in your face'. But writing that Jesus can't use, isn't worth putting a lot of my time into. Time is precious – we know the Earth is on a timeline – we need to use as much of our time as possible to achieve the purposes which God wants us individually to achieve.

I'm not saying you can't ever write something that doesn't have Christian content, but I do encourage you to consider the time and expense you are putting into publishing your work and prayerfully evaluating how much of a 'return' it's going to be bringing for the Lord.

Having an awareness of how much depression and suicide is prevalent in our country, is part of the reason why I want to stress the importance of grabbing every opportunity to encourage or 'lift' someone through your words. Whether it's a social media post, or an email, a private message or other forms of communication, please remember not to be passive, nonchalant, overly corporate, indifferent or complacent. You never know how such a small thing as a positive word in a business email can even save someone's life.

Make your writing and communication efforts count – take every opportunity to touch others with God's love. Let's not waste God's time, our time and other people's time with empty writing.

Are you a Christian?

by Dr ET

“How can you claim to be a Christian?”

“What do you understand a Christian to be?”

“Look at the harm those who claim to be Christian are doing. Doesn't that make you want to give up your belief?”

“Oh, so it is not so much what a Christian might believe but how you see Christians behave?”

“Well, don't all Christians believe the same?”

“I don't know which Christians you are meaning but I know that I don't believe in the same things as many who call themselves conservative Christians but neither do I necessarily believe in the same things as many who are called liberal Christians. Christianity like many belief systems has many flavours.”

“Well, what do you believe?”

“I believe that Jesus showed us what God is like and showed us how to live. As a result, I filter all of the Bible in the light of what Jesus taught and did.

“I find that Jesus' message is one of peace and reconciliation and not judgement. When he confronts those who are claimed to be sinners, he does not confront them with their sin. Rather he shows compassion and allows them to identify their own sin. In love he reaches out and heals and says ‘Sin no more,’

“I do not see him calling people to war, to destroy other nations, and to hate those who disagree with him.

“Yes, that seems to contradict what we read in the Hebrew Scriptures but Jesus made statements like ‘You heard it taught an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you that you must not oppose those who want to hurt you. If people slap you on your right cheek, you must turn the left cheek to them.’ That does not sound like a retaliatory or a judgemental God.

“I seek to follow Christ. I do not hold to a ‘You must believe ...’ gospel. Doctrinal beliefs have led to many of our problems and divisions. We don't see that only on religious matters. We see it in politics, in workplaces, in schools, in most areas of human life.

“It seems to me that we need more compassion, more of a desire to understand one another. I believe that is what Jesus taught and how he lived. Would you be interested in exploring that more?”

Often our witness is more about breaking down resistance to faith than it is about preaching beliefs. When I was asked to write my testimony as a lift conversation, my immediate thought was why would I be drawn to give my testimony? My experience tells me that it is often in response to a question from somebody or something that happened. For me, this has often been when working with students in a one-on-one basis. They were asking questions coming from their own faith perspective or their curiosity about why I lived and taught as I did. My testimony is no longer a singular story but adapts to the needs of my hearer.

This testimony is written in the context of world events where a supposedly Christian president has declared war on a Muslim nation. In the context, the questioner finds the president's actions as unacceptable and therefore a belief in Christ as objectionable.

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Writing Competitions Points Board

Level One		Level Two		Level Three	
Janet Scantlebury	27	Peter Wilson	33	Robert Prins	39
Jenny Fazakerley	24	Prue Francis	30	Sandy Miller	27
Jane Gallagher	15	Verna McFelin	24	Stephen Douglas	18
Marlene Beech	15	Debbie Bennett	12	Kathryn Paul	15
Judy Kibby	12			Taylor Foster	9
Sylvia Stump	12			Pat Kerr	9
Paul Sommer	12			Heather Vincent	9
Robin Simon	9				

Congratulations to our prize winners highlighted above! Also, well done to the following contestants who have been promoted to the next level: Janet Scantlebury, Peter Wilson and Prue Francis and congratulations to Robert Prins, Heather Vincent and Taylor Foster who have reached the Graduates List. Thank you to all who enter our competitions.

In each magazine, placegetters receive points: 15 points for first, 12 points for second and 9 points for third. At the end of May and November, those with the highest points in Levels One, Two and Three are awarded monetary prizes for first, second and third. Prizes are: **\$60 for First Place**, **\$50 for Second Place**, and **\$40 for Third place**. These are usually awarded as Christian bookstore vouchers. Thank you to Andrew Stirling at www.purebooks.nz. Our next prize winners will be published in the December 2026–January 2027 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: Research and write a mini biography on the life and death of a Christian who was martyred during the Renaissance period (15th and 16th centuries AD). Include a brief bibliography comprising only three references. At least 80% of the biography must be in your own words, so ensure you keep citations to a minimum. (500 words, excluding the bibliography.)

General Comments

I received five excellent submissions to this competition, two of which were from first-time entrants Marlene Beech and Paul Sommer. Welcome to you both!

Giving an account of the life and death of anyone in just 500 words is not easy. The main pitfall in writing biographies or stories with limited word count stipulations is to include too much irrelevant information and insufficient relevant information. It is therefore important to determine at the outset what relevant information must be included in as much detail as possible, what can be briefly mentioned as a point of interest, and what should be left out altogether.

I am pleased to say that each of the contestants submitted an outstanding and engaging mini biography by following the above procedure. That is, they only included relevant details pertaining to the faith of their chosen subject, the event/s leading up to their martyrdom and the reason they were martyred. I was particularly blessed to read about two martyrs I had never heard of before.

Awarding places was difficult because the standard of writing was so high. I finally awarded First Place to Marlene Beech (94.5%), Second Place to Paul Sommer (93%), and Third Place Equal to Jenny Fazakerley and Janet Scantlebury (each scoring 92%). Well done to you all!

Unfortunately, one of the entrants could not be placed because they included their bibliography in the main content of their very good biography, thereby significantly exceeding the stipulated wordcount and losing marks as a result. Bibliographies detailing research references should always be included as a footnote at the end of an article, page or chapter, or as an appendix in a book.

I should also point out that in some modern editions of *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*—a work referred to by each contestant—'Foxe' is spelled without the e (i.e. 'Fox'). This may be because 'Foxe' with an e is the Old English spelling of the name.

First Place



Marlene
Beech
of New
Plymouth

Martyrs of the Renaissance: Perotine Massey

During the short reign of Catholic Queen Mary I of England (1553 –1558) at least 280 people were put to death for their Protestant beliefs in what is known as the Marian persecutions. Sixty were women.

One of these, portrayed in a wood cut illustration in John Foxes *Book of Martyrs*, was Perotine Massey. She was part of the Guernsey Martyrs, along with her mother Catherine Cauches and sister Guillemine Gilbert. They were burned together at the stake on 18 July 1556. What makes Perotine stand out from other women was that she was pregnant. During the burning, her son was born in the flames. He rolled out and was caught by a bystander. The bailiff, Elier Gosselin, ordered him thrown back into the flames so he died alongside his mother.

The three women were originally arrested on a charge of theft of a silver cup, but their neighbours testified that they had always lived ‘honest, respectable lives... deemed incapable of theft.’ However, they also added ‘saving only to the commands of the Holy Church they had not been obedient.’

After examination by the Dean of Guernsey and the Catholic curates, the three women were declared heretics and delivered to the bailiff for execution, condemned to be burnt until they were consumed to ashes. They were first strangled, but the rope broke before they died, causing them to fall into the fire, and Perotine to deliver her child as she died. Foxe compared the act of consigning of the baby to the flames to Herod’s cruelty, recording ‘and so the infant baptised in his own blood, and dyed a Martyr, to fill up the number of Gods innocent Sayntes, was both born and dyed a Martyr.’

Accounts of Perotine’s life differ. It was supposed that her husband, David Jores, a Norman Calvinist minister, had fled the island to London to escape persecution just before Perotine’s trial. Other accounts say David Jores left the island three years before the trials and hence the baby could not have been his, calling into question Perotine’s morals.

The question is also raised as to why Perotine did not tell the authorities she was pregnant and thus claim ‘benefit of belly’ which would have delayed the execution until after her child had been born, thus ensuring the child lived.

After the Protestant Queen Elizabeth succeeded her sister Mary, an inquiry was held in 1562 into the deaths of the Guernsey women. The bailiff was questioned as to why he had ordered the live child to be thrown into the flames. His defence was that because the child had been in the heretic's womb, he therefore shared her sin. He was condemned for murder but later pardoned. The Dean was imprisoned, losing his livelihood.

The rise of Calvinism in the Channel Islands has been contributed to reactions to the three women's executions, an enduring legacy of 'beauty from ashes.' A plaque honouring them can be found today on the Tower Hill steps in St Peter's Port, Guernsey.

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Second Place



Paul
Sommer
of Waimate

JAN HUS

In the small town of Hussenitz, Bohemia, c1369 was born a certain Jan Hus. This was in the days of John Wycliffe, instrumental in writing the first translation of the Bible from Latin into English. Hus, whose surname means goose, grew to become a respected citizen, obtaining a master's degree and ultimately doctorate of theology. Recognised as a leading theologian of the time he became the Pastor of the Church of Bethlehem in Prague and the Dean and Rector of Prague University.

His chapel became the centre of a reform movement aiming to expose the problems of the Papal church. As Wycliffe's teachings were introduced to Bohemia in the early 15th century, Hus read his works and became supportive of some of them. Wycliffe encouraged preaching, the use of local language, and that the authority of the church came from the Scriptures and not church traditions. Hus became popular as a citizen and preacher and the reform movement continued to grow. Consequently, the Roman Catholic Church took a dim view of these teachings and proclaimed Wycliffe a heretic and banned his writings. The Bishop of Prague tried unsuccessfully to stop Hus from preaching but Hus was supported by influential people including King Wenceslas. However, eventually with the Pope's decree to punish the whole city while Hus remained, he left Prague and sought refuge with friends where he wrote many letters and treatises, mainly exposing the vices of the Pope, Cardinals and clergy.

In November 1414 Hus was summoned to appear at the ecclesiastical Council of Constance. Reluctant at first, he accepted on the condition of “safe passage” granted by Emperor Sigismund to and from the Council whatever the outcome. Initially on arriving in Constance, he was greeted with crowds of well-wishers among the common people. Unfortunately the Pope had a higher authority and Hus was arrested and imprisoned almost immediately on his arrival. Over three public hearings, he stood before the Council to answer accusations of heresy.

Many charges were made against him. When asked if he had received absolution from Pope John XXIII, he answered, “No, I appealed to the high judge Jesus Christ.”¹ Speaking other words of faith and conviction, he was derided and mocked by the whole Council. The more he spoke the more the hearers were convinced of his heresy. Eventually, on July 6th, 1415, he was found guilty. The bishop declared, “*Now we commit thy soul unto the devil.*” In reply Hus said, “*But I do commend into Thy hands, O Lord Jesus Christ! my spirit which Thou has redeemed.*”²

Refusing to recant, chained to a stake with faggots piled up to his neck, even at this late stage, he looked at his executioner and declared, “*You are now going to burn a goose, but in a century you will have a swan which you can neither roast nor boil.*”³ Prophetic words, relating to Martin Luther one hundred years later. Singing a hymn loud and boldly Jan Hus died a martyr in the flames.

Notes: ^{1, 2, 3} Foxe’s Book of Martyrs, page 101.

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Third Place Equal



Jenny
Fazakerley
of Timaru

Lady Jane Grey - The Nine-Day Queen of England

Lady Jane Grey was born in October 1537 to Lady Frances and Henry Grey. She was the great-granddaughter of Henry VII and her grandmother was a sister of Henry VIII. Jane was raised as a Protestant and received an excellent education as an aristocrat’s daughter. An accomplished student, she spoke five languages, including Hebrew, Greek and Latin. Jane found pleasure in reading classical literature above outdoor pursuits such as falconry and archery.

At age ten, Jane went to reside with Thomas Seymour and his wife, Katherine Parr, to develop her education and social standing. Katherine was a committed Protestant and she shared her strong faith with Jane. As a teenager, Jane corresponded with adult believers concerning complex theological issues.

Thomas Seymour identified Jane as a potential wife for King Edward VI who succeeded his father, Henry VIII. However, Edward had become terminally ill by age 15. Anxious to secure a Protestant successor to the throne, Edward disinherited his Catholic half-sister Mary and changed the succession plan. This allowed Jane to be crowned queen. King's Protector, John Dudley, arranged the marriage of Jane to his son, Lord Guilford Dudley, in a triple wedding ceremony on 25 May 1553.

Jane was distressed to learn of Edward's death soon after and had no desire to take the crown. Her reign lasted only nine days. Mary Tudor, King Henry VIII's daughter, rallied support from the general populace. She had a lawful claim to the throne and the backing of Catholic allies. She was crowned Queen Mary I on 19 July 1553. Jane and Guildford Dudley faced trial and were charged with high treason on 14 November 1553. They were detained at the Tower of London for several months as Mary was reluctant to order their deaths. She believed that Jane had accepted the crown under coercion and thus her conscience troubled her.

However, Jane's fate was sealed when her father was implicated in political movements against Queen Mary. This demonstrated that Jane still posed a threat to her sovereignty. Further, Jane and her husband, both devout Protestants, refused Mary's offer to save their lives if they converted to Catholicism.

At age 17, Jane was bestowed a private execution and was beheaded within an hour of her husband's public demise on Tower Hill on 12 February 1554. Her death demonstrated her character as a devout follower of Christ. She approached her executioner calmly and asked for a quick dispatch. Kneeling, she read Psalm 51 to those gathered there, humble and repentant for her failings in the sight of God.

Her only moment of panic came when blindfolded. Unable to see where to place her head on the block, she asked nervously, "What shall I do? Where is it?" Her last words echoed Luke 23:46 (KJV), "Lord, into Thy hands I commend my spirit" (Fox, 1926, p. 208).

Her legacy arouses sympathy for her youth and reluctant compliance in a political system of which she had little control. As Christians, we can only hope to emulate her composure should we be in circumstances that necessitate beheading for our faith.

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Third Place Equal



Janet
Scantlebury
of Raglan

William Tyndale

William Tyndale was an English linguist who was martyred during the Renaissance. He has been described as the only writer who has had more influence on the English language than William Shakespeare¹.

Tyndale began life as the son of well-to-do yeoman farmers in Gloucestershire in 1494. The world he was born into was changing: the Middle Ages were coming to an end and England was heading towards the Renaissance. The stranglehold of the Catholic Church on Christendom was to be challenged. Tyndale himself was to become a key figure in that challenge.

As a 12-year-old Tyndale began studying at Magdalen College School and later Magdalen College at Oxford University. After receiving a BA and being made a Master of Arts he went on to study at Cambridge in 1517².

Tyndale's time at Cambridge was impacted by Luther's controversial 1517 theses which condemned the Catholic Church. He was also influenced by the translation work of Erasmus, a former Cambridge theologian.

At some stage Tyndale began translating the New Testament into English, something that had been a lifetime ambition. Foxe describes Tyndale as being singularly addicted to the scriptures.³

In fact, he was the first English translator to draw directly from the original manuscripts. As Bragg describes he was admired, "for his profound ability to pluck English meaning from those original Greek biblical phrases."⁴

While working as a chaplain and tutor back in his native Gloucestershire Tyndale became involved in controversy. "I defy the Pope and all his laws" he proclaimed to one opponent, also stating his goal was to "cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the scriptures than thou dost."⁵

To avoid further scrutiny Tyndale moved back to London but soon realized that he was better off to head to Europe where he could work more freely on his English translation. He was never to return.

He was forced to move from Cologne to Worms after his printing of the New Testament was prematurely halted. In 1526 his New Testament was smuggled into England where it was well received in certain quarters. However, the Catholic Church hierarchy viewed him as a dangerous heretic and 3,000 of his New Testaments were publicly burned in London.⁶

While in Worms Tynsdale began work on his translation of the Old Testament after teaching himself Hebrew. Moving to Antwerp he met Henry Philips, a man who was later to betray him to the authorities. In 1535 he was taken into custody and imprisoned in Vilvoorde Castle near Brussels.

A year later Tynsdale was tried and subsequently strangled to death while tied to the stake and his body burned. His final words were, “Lord, open the King of England’s eyes!”⁷

Tyndale’s influence lived on although it was not always recognised. Several versions of the Bible were dependant on his groundbreaking translation work, most notably the King James Version in 1611.

¹ Ian Mortimer from back cover of *William Tyndale* by M. Bragg

² Bragg, *William Tyndale*, p. xi

³ Foxe, *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*, p.223

⁴ Bragg, *William Tyndale*, p.35

⁵ From *Tyndale* directed by D. Astudillo

⁶ Bragg, *William Tyndale*, p. 41

⁷ Foxe, *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*, p.232

Level Two

Judge: Shirley Jamieson

Requirement: Write a letter to the editor of a secular newspaper regarding a current issue. Use a biblical perspective (250 words).

General Comments:

Mainstream media outlets often conform to biases against biblical teaching. It is important for Christian principles to have a voice because it may be the only time readers see an opinion that differs from the general consensus.

A letter to the editor needs to be concise and to the point. Editors are busy people and always have deadlines to meet.

Bowl straight in with the issue that you are addressing. As always, an eye-catching title encourages readers to find out more.

Be practical, state what your opinion is and why. Keep it short and back it with facts. The word limit that editors set varies but 250 words is often the maximum.

As Christians, it often feels imperative to share our personal beliefs as reasons for our stance on an issue, and it is right if we do so with respect. In the case of a letter to a secular newspaper, though, an editor may ignore it.

A letter with a biblical perspective can use many facts which prove our trust in God is based on solid evidence. Hopefully, a letter with this emphasis will be printed.

I received four entries to the competition. Each entrant chose a different topic to write about, and all had valid concerns that needed the public's awareness. Thank you to all who entered the competition this month.

I awarded Prue Francis first place. Her concern is the closure of the Wattie's factory in Napier. She affirms that it is God's design for people to cultivate and harvest their food and recommends New Zealanders to grow produce if possible. She gives several practical suggestions to help.

Verna achieved second place. Her objective letter recommended readers to access reports from a variety of news outlets to gain a more unbiased view of Israel and the war in the Middle East. She points out that Israel's story in the Bible is prophetic and encourages readers to be discerning.

Peter Wilson gained third place for his letter, pointing out that the theory of evolution is actually unscientific. This topic has been bubbling for many years, but Peter has seen recent articles in the newspaper by scientists affirming the theory.

Congratulations to the winners. Imagine if all the members of Christian Writers emailed a letter with a biblical perspective to a newspaper, I wonder what impact we would have?

First Place



Prue
Francis
of New
Plymouth

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Grow your own! After Watties announced the closure of their factory in Napier, our food security once more dominated media. If we have land around our home, we can grow food. If we live in places with no green space, we can join community gardens or share a garden with a neighbour or friend. Cultivating and harvesting have been God's design for humanity since the Garden of Eden.

We can all help with food security. As well, our physical and mental health is bettered by gardening. One Biblical writer says that 'those who work their land will have abundant food'. (Proverbs 28:19).

According to Whirika (an environmental consultancy), 'it's estimated that about 20% of our population are unable to access sufficient affordable, nutritious food on

a regular basis'. For a dairying nation, butter and cheese are excessively priced. With the increasing cost of food we should think about ways we can help our communities thrive.

Some solutions? Encourage and support gardening initiatives in schools and communities. Get gardening, plant seeds, swap produce and buy from farmers' markets. Buy local produce rather than imported goods. Share surplus vegetables with those who are on lower incomes. Teach others how to grow spinach.

Vineyards and grain crops are part of our landscape. In Bible times, grain, wine and oil were essential survival items. Perhaps we can return to the basics and feed our population from our fertile land.

Sincerely,

Prue Francis

Second Place



Verna
McFelin
of Christchurch

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

In a world flooded with competing narratives, the ancient question Pilate posed to Jesus feels startlingly current, "*What is truth?*"

Nowhere is this more pressing than in coverage regarding Israel and the Middle East. That tiny nation, roughly the size of Canterbury, sits at the heart of global attention, drawing both fierce devotion and bitter hatred. This is no accident. Scripture foretold it. Israel's story is not merely political, it is prophetic.

Yet discerning truth in today's media landscape demands real wisdom. The same footage surfaces across opposing news channels, carrying entirely different commentary. With artificial intelligence now capable of fabricating images, videos and voices, our eyes and ears alone can no longer be trusted guides.

Proverbs 4:7 urges us to pursue wisdom above all else. Part of that wisdom is understanding that every media outlet reflects the values and interests of those who own and fund it. This doesn't make all journalism dishonest, but it does call us to think carefully, seek multiple sources and hold what we're told loosely.

The prophet Isaiah reminds us that God's purposes for Israel will stand, regardless of what any broadcaster declares. For those of us who take Scripture seriously, that is both an anchor and a lens.

The responsibility to pursue truth rather than simply accept a comfortable narrative, rests with each of us. May we be people who, like the Bereans, examine everything carefully.

Yours sincerely,

Verna McFelin

Third Place



Peter
Wilson
of New
Plymouth

Are 'Scientists' Reliable?

Dear Sir,

After reading some recent articles in your paper I am forced to ask, 'How reliable are our scientists?'

Someone with a scientific degree should be trustworthy when they make a statement about a topic within their subject field. Of late I have noticed far too many scientists assuming certain information is true and factual when it is not. Evolution is a glaring example! Many scientists generally seem to accept this theory as fact when the event is not even possible.

Facts learnt by observation and experimentation that can be repeated under scrutiny presumably are correct. When scientists are conjecturing about things that they cannot observe, that have never been observed, that cannot be repeated, how reliable is their information? When scientists believe 'nothing' can explode and make 'everything', including the very complex creature man, their credibility must be questioned.

Far too many scientists assume the earth has been in existence billions of years when in fact Biblical evidence and the Jewish calendar, teaches that the earth is approximately 6,000 years old. The genealogical records of Jesus' ancestors go right back to Adam. This was never disputed by Jesus. He was jointly involved in the creation the earth and He never gave any indication that the age of the earth was not, as the people living at His time, thought it was. He was also alive at the time of the creation and is still alive today. If scientists express a belief contrary to the facts of God's word, who do you believe?

I know who I can trust!

Level Three

Judge: Julia Martin

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

General Comments

The Bible contains an inexhaustible collection of fascinating characters to choose from for this assignment. Many of these biblical characters – both men and women – reveal human complexity with characteristics we either admire or despise. The characters are never black or white, and the inspired word of God makes no effort to gloss over or hide human failings.

This assignment was straightforward. It involved:

1. Choosing a character from the Bible you either admire or despise.
2. Stating who they were and what they did.
3. Writing a character study which may include their physical appearance, personality, emotions, behaviour, and interaction with others.
4. Drawing lessons from their example which have applications for our lives today.

There has been much emphasis lately on the correct formatting of competition entries and submissions for the magazine. I must admit I have not treated this issue as seriously as I ought, but have concentrated more on the content, quality, and accuracy of the entries received for judging. As 15% of the final mark is made up of format and layout, I will take more notice of this aspect in future. I'm pleased to say this time the entrants have mostly complied with these requirements.

I received seven entries for this competition and had great difficulty choosing the placegetters.

I awarded first place to Sandy Miller for her character study of Job in the Old Testament. She covered all the requirements of this assignment and gave several suitable applications drawn from Job's experiences.

Second place went to Robert Prins for his study of a lesser- known Bible character, King Jehoshaphat. Third place equal went to Heather Vincent and Stephen Douglas. My thanks to the other contestants who were followed close behind in marks.

First Place



Sandy
Miller
of Auckland

The Faithfulness of Job

James 1:12 teaches that those who endure trials are blessed and will receive the crown of life promised by the Lord. Job is a clear example of this truth. I admire Job because despite losing his wealth, his children, and his health, Job chose to trust God. He questioned and suffered, yet he did not abandon his faith. His story shows that a faithful servant can endure great trials while continuing to trust God's purpose and goodness.

Job lived in the land of Uz. The Bible describes him as “blameless and upright, a man who feared God and shunned evil”.¹ His respect for God influenced every part of his life. He was a devoted father to seven sons and three daughters. Each day, he prayed for them and offered burnt offerings on their behalf. Job's blessings extended beyond his faith and family. He was wealthy, influential, and highly respected. The Bible calls him “the greatest man of all the East”.² He owned 11,000 animals, had many servants, and was a prominent figure in his community.

From the outside, Job's life looked secure and complete. However, in a single moment, everything changed. With God's permission, Satan brings disaster into Job's life to test whether his faith was real. Job loses his children, possessions and is afflicted with painful boils from head to toe.

When Job needed comfort and support, his wife told him to curse God while his three friends accused him of being a sinner. Job then witnesses to his friends saying, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust Him”.³ In suffering we may feel abandoned by God, but He sees us and knows exactly what we are going through.⁴

In time, God restores Job's life after he proves his faithfulness to Him. God gives him “twice as much as he had before”.⁵ Job's livestock is increased, and he is blessed with more children.

In the story of Job, we learn that when life feels hopeless, God comforts us.⁶ Job shows that suffering can draw us closer to God even though we don't understand why God allows suffering to happen.⁷ Instead of focussing on what we don't understand about God, we need to remember what we do know about God. We are called to praise and faithfully follow God, not only when he blesses us, but also in our hardest and most difficult moments.⁸

1. Job 1:1, NKJV refers.
2. Job 1:3, NKJV refers.
3. Job 13:15, NKJV.
4. Psalm 34:17-18, NKJV.
5. Job 42:10, NKJV refers.
6. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, NKJV
7. Romans 5:3-4, NKJV
8. Job 1:21, NKJV

Second Place



Robert
Prins
of Auckland East

What an Inspiration!

It's hard to believe anyone would do anything so stupid. But King Jehoshaphat did.

As King Jehoshaphat and his army marched into battle, Jehoshaphat's singers marched in front of the army to sing, *"Give thanks to the LORD, for his steadfast love endures for ever"* (2 Chronicles 20:21). Behind the singers came the rest of Jehoshaphat's small army. To the untrained eye, it looked like Jehoshaphat's army would be massacred. Three huge armies had combined to destroy Judah – and they were all much better prepared than Jehoshaphat's army.

Jehoshaphat inspires me because he trusted God. If God said it, Jehoshaphat believed it. If God said it, Jehoshaphat did it.

Previously in his reign, Jehoshaphat had cleansed Judah of the idols the people had been worshipping (2 Chronicles 17:3 – 6). He also had Levites go through his kingdom to teach the people God's law (verses 7 – 9). God blessed Jehoshaphat for turning his heart toward the Lord (verses 10 – 13).

Jehoshaphat also made mistakes. He made an alliance with wicked King Ahab, and later with his son, King Ahaziah, in Israel. (2 Chronicles 18, 20:35 – 37). But Jehoshaphat didn't let his mistakes define him. Instead, he poured himself into serving God, trusting him with every detail of his life.

So when God told him that the battle would be won without his army having to fight, Jehoshaphat believed God (2 Chronicles 20:14 – 19). It wasn't stupid; Jehoshaphat trusted in God. He showed his trust and thankfulness by placing singers at the head of the army to praise the Lord (verses 20 – 21). As they praised God, they gave him glory. As they praised God, he honoured them for their praise.

God rewarded Jehoshaphat's trust and the battle ended just the way he said it would. "And when they began to sing and praise, the LORD set an ambush against the men of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah, so that they were routed" (2 Chronicles 20:22). Miracles happened because Jehoshaphat trusted God and praised him.

.Let's be like Jehoshaphat who trusted God down to every detail. Let's be like Jehoshaphat who was full of prayer, thanksgiving and praise. Like Jehoshaphat, let's be defined by our faith, not by our mistakes. And let us turn hearts toward God just as Jehoshaphat did.

What an inspiration King Jehoshaphat is for us!

Third Place Equal



Heather
Vincent
of Tauranga

Esther – Queen of Persia

Esther is one of only two books in the Bible named after a woman.

I greatly admire this woman whose fame is not so much on what she did and said, but her quiet submission to authority and God's plan for her life. She didn't seek fame but was challenged to recognize that her life was in Higher Hands (God's) and that she was "brought into the kingdom for such a time as this." Esther 4:14b

Yet from the beginning she was not aware of this 'higher purpose'. Rather she humbly, quietly, accepted her changing circumstances. We're not given many details about her early life but we know she was from a Jewish family which had been exiled from Israel to Persia with her family, by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon. Esther 2:5&6. We presume she was orphaned and brought up by her older cousin Mordecai. Esther 2:7. Mordecai had taken her in as his own daughter when her parents died.

We know she was a beautiful woman with a lovely figure who won a beauty contest! Yet she didn't become proud of her position. Rather she won the respect of Hegai, the Kings eunuch appointed to take charge of the women. "She pleased him and won his favour." Esther 2:9, in fact, in v15 she "won the favour of everyone who saw her." And "She won the kings favour and approval more than any of the other virgins."

Esther shows great humility throughout her life, as she submits to and acknowledges both Mordecai's and the King's authority. She kept her family (Jewish) background secret as directed by Mordecai. Ch2:20 "For she continued to Mordecai's instructions as she had done when he was bringing her up."

I admire her bravery in approaching the King, knowing she could be killed if the King was displeased with her and did not hold out the golden scepter. While asking Mordecai and the other Jews to pray and fast for her, she boldly said, 'If I perish I perish.' Esther 4:16b She didn't take her relationship with the king for granted.

I love the way she gains confidence, and shows great wisdom, and gains the respect of the king, in her position of responsibility as Queen. Esther 9:12 "The king said to Esther,"What is your petition? It will be given you."

Truly she was a woman who is a wonderful inspiration to us today.

Third Place Equal



Stephen
Douglas
of Wellington

Development Through Hardship

An Old Testament character I admire is Joseph, whose life is gripping and filled with the unexpected. One season he is with his family dreaming dreams and the next he is in prison. A key lesson is how his hardships shape, rather than damage him.

We meet Joseph, an honest seventeen-year-old, working for his half-brothers. Often, he reports their bad behaviour to their father. One day he shares his dreams, but they are not impressed. Also, the brothers see the coloured robe made for him as favouritism.

A dramatic turning point is when in obedience to his father's request, Joseph goes to find his brothers pasturing their flock in Shechem. The brothers see him and say to each other, "here comes the dreamer, let's kill him."¹ However, they sell him to Midianite traders.

Now in Egypt, Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh's army, buys him as his slave. Yahweh is with Joseph, enabling him to work with honesty for his master who promotes him to his personal attendant. Life once again is good.

Joseph is handsome, and Potiphar's wife sets out to seduce him, but he refuses to comply. She falsely accuses him; this angers his master who throws him into

prison. There the prison warden is so impressed with Joseph's actions and behaviour. He places him in charge of all the prisoners. While in prison, his dream interpretations become a reality for Pharaoh's cupbearer.

Two years later Pharaoh, troubled by his own dreams, seeks help. His cupbearer suddenly remembers Joseph helping him and has him brought before Pharaoh. Joseph listens to Pharaoh explaining his dreams and interprets them. Pharaoh makes Joseph the overseer of Egypt, in preparation for the predicted famine.

Due to grain shortage in Canaan, his brothers come to Egypt to buy grain. Joseph recognises them, forgives them for their mistreatment by saying, "what you meant as evil, God has turned to good."²

Over time Joseph's family come to Egypt for survival. Because Pharaoh is pleased with Joseph's overseeing, he offers his family the best land.

Throughout his life, Yahweh is pleased with Joseph's faithfulness in hardship and contentment; lessons learned are:

- Knowing God is for me rather than against me; Romans 8:31
- I am to forgive wrongs because God has forgiven me; Matthew 6:12
- Trials and hardships are for my benefit; 1 Peter 1:6-7 and Psalm 34:17-20
- Yahweh would rather use me to bless than curse; Romans 12:14

Notes:

¹ Genesis 37:19

² Genesis 50:20



Competitions for August 2026

Due by 1 July 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: Write a positive review of your favourite book or movie, detailing how it impacted you and why you recommend it to others. The title of your review should read: 'Review of [Name of Book or Movie]' and the subtitle should read: 'Written or Produced by [Name of Author or Producer] in [Year]. (400 words, excluding the title and subtitle.) (Reminder – formatting requirements are above).



Debbie

Email entry to Debbie McDermott at level1@nzchristianwriters.org

Level Two—for members 16 years old and over

Requirement: Choose a well-known nursery rhyme and write a modern 21st century version of it, choosing an inventive title. Quote the original rhyme underneath your own version. (Maximum of 25 lines total.) (Reminder – formatting requirements are above).



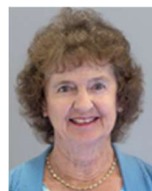
Shirley

Email entry to Shirley Jamieson at level2@nzchristianwriters.org

Level Three—for members 16 years old and over

Requirement: A young friend or relative has decided to abandon the Christian faith. Write a sensitive letter outlining reasons why you believe this is an unwise thing to do. (300 words.)

(Reminder – formatting requirements are above).



Julia

Email entry to Julia Martin at level3@nzchristianwriters.org



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.