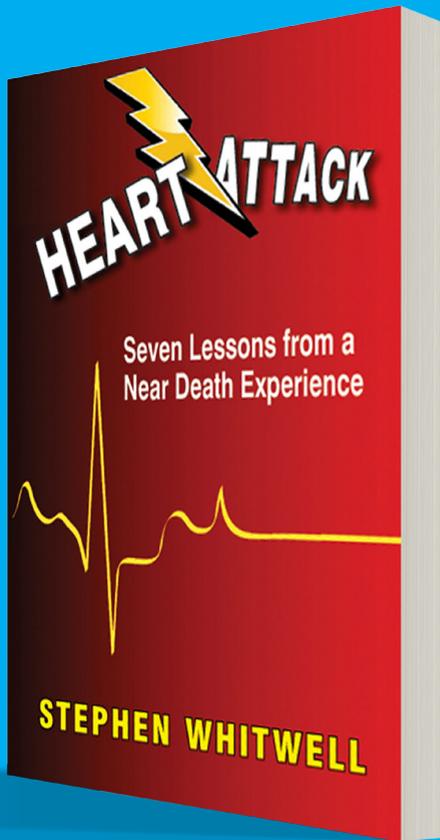


OCTOBER - NOVEMBER 2016

# THE CHRISTIAN writer



## BOOK REVIEW

### Heart Attack

BY STEPHEN WHITWELL

SEE INSIDE FOR

Competitions  
New Members  
& Latest News

*Rightly explaining the word of truth – 2 Timothy 2:15*  
(New Revised Standard Version of the Bible)



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Cheques can be sent via post to Jan Pendergrast, Seales Road, Oropi RD3, Tauranga

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

Post a copy of your book to Julia Martin

286 Karapiro Road, RD4, Cambridge 3496

(NB: Your book will be added as a donation to the NZCW library on completion of the review.)

**The Christian Writer** is published bimonthly by the New Zealand Christian Writers and distributed to all its members. Contributions on the theme of writing are always welcome. If you have some advice or encouragement for Christian writers, or an announcement of some event of interest to members, do send it to the editor for consideration by the 20th day of the month prior to the publication date. Submissions must be emailed as Microsoft Word or Open Office documents and are to 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 the highest quality of writing possible.

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# The Christian Writer

Oct – Nov 2016

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The views and opinions of authors expressed in this magazine do not necessarily state or reflect those of the editor.

## Website:

Our vibrant, user-friendly website is full of interesting information, such as details of seminars and copies of past magazines. It also gives each individual member an online presence. So please encourage other Christian Writers you know to join us via our website.

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

# Vice-President's Report

Hello to everyone. How fast this year is passing.

Recently we held our Spring Seminar at Rossgrove Chapel. It was good to see a slight increase in numbers on the day. Speakers were Ray Curle, Janet Balcombe and Mark Holloway. Our grandsons all scored a copy of Jan Pendergrast's new book, *Pop's Busy Blue Truck*, and are enjoying it.

We also held our AGM on the day of the Spring Seminar. I stood down as President of NZ Christian Writers and Justin St Vincent was elected as President in my place. I do appreciate those who have helped me through the years, especially Julie Belding when I first took over from her, Janet Pointon when she was Vice-President and Jan Pendergrast. Thanks too to each member of the Committee. You have been great to work with.

I am sure Justin will do well in this leadership role, as he has the technological skills that I lack. It is only the second time that NZ Christian Writers has had a male President, the other being Bill Haythornthwaite, who was President for a short time some years ago.

Beth Walker has stepped down from the Committee. Beth was a founding member of NZ Christian Writers and has been on the Committee for many years. She has also looked after the archives of NZ Christian Writers. Eion Field has also resigned from the Committee. Thanks to both of you.

Congratulations also to Justin and Sara-Maria on the birth of their new baby

Maxima. We hope you enjoy being parents as much as Mike and I have.

Our thanks to Julia Martin who has agreed to look after the marking of the Level Three competitions. It is appreciated.

Don't forget to book in early for the coming retreat in 2017 as spaces at Flaxmill are limited. It sounds a lovely venue and I'm sure it will be an encouraging time for those who come. (See Jan's article on page 11.)

I'd like to conclude with a verse I wrote today:

*Keep on, although the road is steep,  
Trust Jesus, He is there to keep.  
Look up when things are really tough,  
For Jesus promises you strength enough.*

Janet Fleming



*Janet with her grandchildren,  
Zac (4) and Ethan (2)*

# New Zealand Christian Writers

## 33rd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

held on 3rd September 2015 at Rossgrove Chapel, Auckland

### Minutes

---

20 people attended.

Janet Fleming chaired and Janet Pointon took the minutes.

**Apologies:** Ruth Linton, Janette Busch, Barbara McNaughton, Rod Hickman, Beth Roose, Julie Belding, Fred Swallow.

**Minutes** from last year read by Janice Gillgren.  
Approved: Justin St Vincent / Debbie McDermott

**Financial Report** read by Jan Pendergrast.

Total Funds: Balance at 1.8.16 was 1605.09 but NZCW funds are \$805.09 as Jan Pendergrast lent \$800 to NZCW to help cover the deposit on next year's Writers' Retreat.

147 members as at 31.7.2016.

Jan moved that her report be adopted.  
Seconded by Justin St Vincent. (A copy of the report is available on request.)

Janet Fleming then read her President's Report. (A copy of the report is attached).

Janet Pointon read a poem written by Janet Fleming in 1993, entitled 'Give Me a Vision of the Cross'.

#### **Committee:**

Janet Fleming thanked Beth Walker for all the work she has done for NZ Christian Writers since becoming a member in August 1983 and being on the committee since 1991. She presented Beth with a Service Certificate and gift.

Jan Pendergrast took the floor for the nomination and election / re-election of committee members.

#### **Election of committee:**

Janet Fleming nominated Justin St Vincent for President. Seconded by Debbie McDermott.

Vice President: Janet Fleming. (Justin St Vincent/ Beth Walker)

#### **Current Committee Members:**

Justin St Vincent (P), Janet Fleming (VP), Jan Pendergrast (Treasurer), Debbie McDermott (Editor), Janette Busch, Fred Swallow, Julia Martin, Rod Hickman.

Committee to re-stand as above: Janet Fleming/Justin St Vincent.

Jan Pendergrast thanked Janet Fleming for the 13 years of being President and presented her with a gift. She said the token gift given to Beth and Janet did not by any means measure up to what they have both done for NZCW.

Dave Palmer, from Christchurch, closed off the AGM with prayer at 12:51pm.

### President's AGM Report

Welcome to the 33rd AGM of New Zealand Christian Writers. It is good to see those members who are present here today.

Congratulations to our competition winners for 2015. Do keep up the entries. Remember the more times you enter, your chance of winning a prize is increased. I especially encourage those who are under 20 to enter as there are not many members in this age bracket and you have a very good chance of winning. (Sorry Jan, you don't qualify.)

Thank you to those who mark the competitions. We do appreciate the time you give to help our writers improve their work. Debbie McDermott marks Level 1, Janice Gillgren Level 2, and Ruth Linton Level 3. Vicki Nogaj judges the Under 20 entries.

Congratulations to all those who have been published in the past year and to those of you who have gained awards in doing so.

NZ Christian Writers Local Groups continue in various areas. Janice Gillgren, leader of the Northland Group says, 'The Thursday group is going great. We had two new people today, one of whom seemed keen to continue. There were eight of us at the meeting. The Friday group has been struggling a bit but is doing okay when not too many of the members have to be working.'

Jan Pendergrast of the Tauranga Group states, 'The Tauranga Group is going well. We met at Ruth's last time with six of us... I am still the 'go to' person, but each member has a turn at planning and leading the meeting.'

Christchurch leader, Dave Palmer writes, 'Christchurch Group ticking along. Numbers vary from 3 to 8 or 9 but all seem enthusiastic. Several have projects on the go.'

West Auckland is led by Dianne Spain who says, 'Our group is going well. We generally get a group of around 6-7 once a month on a Saturday afternoon... Each month one of the group volunteers to chair the next meeting and another member volunteers to do a devotion. We have had a lot of fun writing, reading and hearing the pieces members write for the task each month.'

Our Autumn Seminar was held on the YWAM ship Pacific Hope with around 40 attending. Speakers of the day were Rosie Boom and John Peachey. A great time was had by all. Thanks to our speakers for today. We do appreciate the time and effort you have put in for our Spring Seminar.

Thanks to the Committee for the work you do. Members include Janette Busch, (our South Island representative), Justin St Vincent, Jan Pendergrast, Debbie McDermott, Beth Walker, Fred Swallow, Julia Martin, Rod Hickman and myself. Sue Beguely was elected to the Committee last year but resigned after a short period of time. Eion Field has also been a Committee member, but recently resigned his position. Beth has decided after many years as

a Committee member and as one of the founding members of the NZ Christian Writers that it is time for her to step down from the Committee. She has handled the archives of NZ Christian Writers for many years. Thanks Beth.

Thanks to Jan Pendergrast for ably handling the Treasurer's job. Thank you, Julia for running the library. Thanks to Justin for organising the website. Thank you Rod for recording the minutes for our meetings.

Thanks to Debbie for all the work you have done in editing the magazine. It looks great. Thanks to Dave Palmer for posting the hard copies of the magazine.

Thank you to all our members. There were 147 members at the conclusion of this financial year.

While mentioning members, Bob Sargeson, of New Plymouth, a long-time member of NZ Christian Writers, went home to be with the Lord this year. We offer our condolences to his family and all those who have been bereaved over the past year.

We are hoping to hold our biennial retreat at the end of April 2017. We have booked the Flaxmill Event Centre at Flaxmill Bay. Keep an eye on the next magazine for details.

After 13 years as President I feel it would be good for NZ Christian Writers to have a change of leadership. As such I am stepping down from the President's position. I thank every member for the support you have given me and pray that my successor may encourage each one of you to continue on your writing journey.

In conclusion Janet Pointon is going to read a poem that I wrote some years ago. I pray it may be an encouragement to each of you.

Thank you.

Janet Fleming

# Spring Seminar Report

By Debbie McDermott

The Spring Seminar—held at Ross Grove Chapel in Auckland on 3rd September—was attended by 23 people. After welcoming those present, Janet Fleming invited Justin St Vincent to commit the day to the Lord in prayer.

This was followed by a devotion by Julia Martin on how silence can be golden, but it can also be a sin. While we cannot save a person's soul (that is God's work), the Lord has **commanded** us to share our faith. When we don't, we deny Christ and stymie the work he wants to do through us. God can't use our silence. We must be prepared to give an answer for the hope we have.

Our first guest speaker of the day was **Janet Balcombe**, wife of Ray Curle and author of award winning *Take a Walk on the Wild Side*. Janet's topic was entitled:

## From Outlaw to Ashton Wylie Literary Award Finalist



Janet Balcombe

[www.wildsidepublishing.com](http://www.wildsidepublishing.com)

### Receiving and fulfilling the mandate

God gave Janet a mandate to write a book on her life story, but the more she tried to do it right, the more bamboozled she became. Then the Lord spoke to her: "Stop telling the stories, and start writing them down!" God made it clear that he wanted her to write leaning totally on the Holy Spirit, who would show her how to weave the stories together. He would also take care of the technical aspects (such as proofreading) by putting her in contact with people with those strengths.

As fellow Christian writers, we too must lean on God if we are to fulfil the mandate he has given us. Some of the material we write is provocative to the enemy. Don't be blasé about its spiritual significance, or tempted to charge ahead without sufficient prayer.

### Remember your audience

It is vital to establish who your audience is and then to be faithful in writing to and for them. Don't fall into the trap of trying to speak to everyone. For instance, 'feeding' mature Christians in a work intended for the unsaved could result in losing the unsaved audience. Presenting truth to the unsaved requires the leading of the Holy Spirit if we are to avoid drowning them in it before they can swim. Be faithful to the mandate God gives for each project.

### Be real—avoid Christianese

Whether writing for Christians or non-Christians, we must train ourselves out of using Christianese because unsaved people are often listening. When Janet's book was being proofread and prepared for print, her friend, who doesn't know Jesus, didn't understand what some of Janet's sentences meant. Janet had to rethink how she wrote. Christianese is an enemy. We need to be real.

### Let the story bring the truth

To bring spiritual truths, we need to wrap them in stories, otherwise it's just dry preaching. Storytelling enables hidden layers of truth to be unwrapped in an entertaining and relative manner.

### The appraising and finishing process

Following the appraisal of her manuscript, Janet was dismayed to discover there was still much work to be done before her book could be published. As she sat grinding over sentences she knew were bland, she'd press in to God to lift them and lift them again until he said they were finished. In Janet's own words: 'Mediocre isn't an option in God's economy. Neither is lazy.'

## Keep persevering

Writing and publishing is not for the faint-hearted! Many problems have to be dealt with, but if God has given you a mandate to write, he will lead you.

Our second speaker was **Ray Curle**, Business Development Manager for Initiate Media and Advertising Manager for *Christian Life* news magazine. He spoke on:

## Tips on Self-Publishing



Ray Curle

[advertise@initiatemedia.net](mailto:advertise@initiatemedia.net)

Ray knew nothing about writing or marketing books until he met his future wife, Janet Balcombe. At the time, the first paperback version of Janet's *Take a Walk on the Wild Side* had just been published.

### The book's front cover

After doing a second print run, Ray and Janet decided to make the front cover more appealing to men. However, after being told the cover still wasn't accurately defining the essence of the book, Janet prayed about it and God gave her a dream in which she saw a picture of the new front cover.

### Writing persuasive back cover copy

Ray and Janet discovered the back cover was just as important as the front cover when it came to marketing.

According to Casey Demchak, '...moments after being engaged by your cover, readers are going to flip your book over to read the back cover. If your front cover is good enough to grab readers, your back cover needs to convince them to buy.'

Consider the following tips:

- 1. Start with a headline that makes or implies a promise.** Headlines capture the attention of readers and drive them into your body copy. Start with an action word, then state or imply what readers can expect.
- 2. Make your copy 'at-a-glance' friendly.** If your headline draws readers in, don't lose them by using large blocks of text to fill out your back cover. Rather make liberal use of headlines, subheadings, short paragraphs and bullet points.
- 3. Choose the right voice** that matches your book and fuels it with emotion. Depending on your topic, your voice should emanate authority, compassion, wisdom, humour, suspense, intrigue, etc.
- 4. Create a powerful rhythm.** You've got one page to motivate people to read your book. Your back cover should have a beat to it that you can snap your fingers to.
- 5. Focus on what your book is about**—not on what happens. It's acceptable to write about what happens, but your back cover copy should be more on how readers will benefit from your book.
- 6. Stir up human emotions.** The marketing messages that move us are ones that grip us emotionally. Describe the benefits readers will derive from your book in emotional human-value terms. Your reader wants your book to fuel specific emotions within them. Identify those emotions and use your back cover copy to stir them up.
- 7. Leave your reader wanting more.** Conclude your back cover in a manner that leaves your readers no choice but to flip through your table of contents as they're reaching for their wallet.

### The complete self-publishing process

To compete successfully, you must follow the same steps a commercially published book does (i.e. manuscript assessment, editing, design, proofreading, production, publicity and distribution).

PledgeMe crowdfunding initiative can also be helpful in meeting publishing costs.

### Bringing your book to the marketplace

1. **Book an author’s table** at the annual CBANZ convention and take a smart Point of Sale with you.
2. **Send an Information Sheet** to bookstores and interested parties. Details to include are the book’s title, author, publisher, distributor price, and page count; a picture of the cover; and any glowing reviews.
3. **Visit as many bookstores as you can.** If possible, send each store a copy of your book on a sale or return basis and ask if they would like to stock it.
4. **Create a smart looking website** with a shopping basket so people can buy your book and contact you. Get a professional to help you. Your landing page is a science in itself.
5. **Advertising is key to marketing.** An advert placed in a national publication such as *Christian Life* news magazine, or on one of Rhema Media’s broadcasting channels, has the potential to reach thousands of people in New Zealand. *Christian Life* also offers a FREE editorial synopsis package.

**Mark Holloway**, author of *The Freedom Diaries* and Director of Holloway & Hudson, then spoke on the topic of:

### How to Know What to Write About

Mark began with the statement: ‘Imagine if you could hear him [God] speak to you. About everything. **All the time.**’ This became a reality for Mark when he found himself having a two-way conversation with God one day. This was the beginning of many such conversations, a good number of which have been published in *The Freedom Diaries*.



Mark Holloway  
[mark@holloways.co.nz](mailto:mark@holloways.co.nz)

Just as Mark has learned to hear God’s voice through two-way conversation, we can too. In John 5:30, Jesus himself said he could do nothing without first hearing God’s voice on the matter.

God is always ready to speak to us, but in order to hear him, we need to pursue him. He wants to work on stuff with us, not just have us leave things at his feet.

### How to have a two-way conversation

Just as the Old Testament prophets wrote down what God said to them, we can too. Simple guidelines to follow are:

1. **Ask God your question.**
2. **Start writing God’s answer in faith.** If you think you’re making his answer up, tell God so, then wait for what he says and keep writing.
3. **Be yourself in the conversation.** God doesn’t mind your behaviour as much as you do. He will help you fix any wrong attitude you may have.

If the enemy deceives you into thinking you have a blank mind, bring your blank mind into your conversation with God and he will give you an answer on how to deal with it.

Just as any healthy relationship cannot survive without conversation, neither can our writing be of any lasting value without hearing and following God’s voice of direction. We **can** hear him speak to us all the time if we will but pursue him.

The seminar concluded at around 4:00pm and left us all with plenty to think about.

Promote your book in  
**Christian Life**



Low-cost package with **free synopsis** of your book in the editorial pages and advert in the Resources section

Contact Ray Curle, Initiate Media  
p 09 281 4896 or email  
ray.curle@initiatemedia.net  
Check out [www.initiatemedia.net](http://www.initiatemedia.net)

## Welcome to NEW MEMBERS

<b>Eric Boamah</b>	Wellington
<b>Robyn Cotton</b>	Tauranga
<b>Cassie Cross</b>	Whangaparaoa
<b>Jill Fowler</b>	Henderson, Auckland
<b>Brent Lindsay</b>	Manurewa, Auckland
<b>Karen Loo</b>	Avondale, Auckland
<b>Cassie Cross</b>	Whangaparaoa
<b>Geoff &amp; Ruth McColl</b>	Maungatapere
<b>Joanne Rolston</b>	Snells Beach
<b>Gregg Taylor</b>	Tauranga

## and RETURNING MEMBER

**Gina van Wichen** Invercargill

### REMEMBER

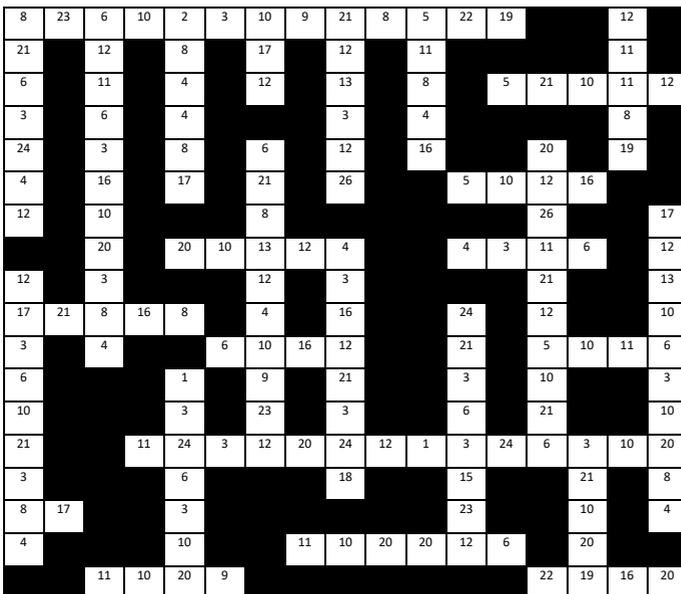
to email your photo and mini bio to Justin St Vincent  
([editor@xtrememusic.org](mailto:editor@xtrememusic.org))  
for uploading to our website

## CODE CRACKER

Each number represents the same letter throughout the puzzle. Three clues have been given to help you. (Not all letters of the alphabet are used.)

A -	B -	C - 24
D -	E -	F -
G -	H -	I - 3
J -	K -	L -
M -	N -	O -
P -	Q -	R -
S - 11	T -	U -
V -	W -	X -
Y -	Z -	

**Solution to Code on  
Page 26**



# Announcing our 2017 Retreat

Written by Jan Pendergrast

Your committee has decided to hold our 2017 Retreat at Flaxmill Event Centre on the Coromandel Peninsular from 27- 30 April. This beautiful centre is at Flaxmill Bay and across the road from the beach, close to walking tracks, a five-minute drive to the Whitianga ferry and a short drive to Cooks Beach and Hot Water Beach. The facilities are immaculate and the accommodation is awesomely comfortable and warm.

Hans and I were treated to a complementary weekend last June. The house we stayed in— one of five—had three twin/double rooms, a well equipped kitchen and two bathrooms. The centre also has four cottages: two double and two twin/double, also with bathrooms and kitchens. Three sleeper cabins are available.

We have booked it for exclusive use, so will be the only ones there. Although there are power points and camping sites, we are not permitted to take caravans, or motorhomes. The numbers will therefore be limited to the forty available beds.

The Conference centre is equipped with all the high tech gadgetry we need; the kitchen is modern and there is a comfortable lounge and dining area. All our meals will be in the main dining room.

Because we are a non-profit organisation, we have been registered with the Big Toe Foundation and approved for a 50% accommodation subsidy; a huge blessing. [www.bigtoe.org.nz/](http://www.bigtoe.org.nz/)

The cost will depend on what type of accommodation you prefer; the cottages being the most expensive. While I haven't factored in the meals and the speakers yet, my estimate is the total cost each will be between \$250 and \$300 dollars.

We are sourcing quality speakers at present.

We have to pay the full fee by the end of March, so will not be asking for a deposit, but for the full amount by mid-March.

This is a wonderful opportunity for a great retreat in an idyllic setting, so you won't want to miss it.

I encourage you to look at Flaxmill online: [www.flaxmill.co.nz](http://www.flaxmill.co.nz)

Also go to the following [Link](#) for my report of our stay and more photographs, or email me at [jan@roads-end.co.nz](mailto:jan@roads-end.co.nz) for more details.



*Flaxmill bedroom comfort*

## Need Professional Editing/Writing Services?

These NZCW members can help:

### Janette Busch

E: [WritingAnswers1@gmail.com](mailto:WritingAnswers1@gmail.com)  
Mob: +64 21 233 7691

### Marie Anticich

E: [marieanticich@gmail.com](mailto:marieanticich@gmail.com)

### Sue Beguely

E: [sue@triplecoilscript.co.nz](mailto:sue@triplecoilscript.co.nz)  
Mob: +64 27 533 0188

### Selina Chan

E: [selina\\_chan@hotmail.com](mailto:selina_chan@hotmail.com)  
Mob: +64 21 104 3686

# The Benefits of Bringing Your Talent to NZCW

By Ruth Linton

So you've joined the NZ Christian Writers. What is the value of that? Well, you receive a magazine six times a year and you have a website profile. There are seminars twice a year but they're all held in Auckland at present. If you live in Invercargill you're unlikely to be able to attend.

Then there's the content of the magazine including the competitions. Maybe you're a successful published author or have a regular column in a newspaper or magazine. The 'how to articles' and the competitions are pretty basic. After all you have completed one or more tertiary level writing courses...

Wait a minute! Let's think more carefully about other possible benefits. Let's start with the magazine. Perhaps you could submit an article suited to more advanced writers and increase the value of the magazine to a wider audience. The editor loves to receive 'how to' types of articles, articles that motivate people to write and share their faith, puzzles relating to writing, book reviews (your book or a book that has helped you), letters to the editor with suggestions, praise and encouragement, and adverts of other competitions, writing courses and seminars as well as books about writing. You could also share areas where you believe you could help others. (e.g. Can you edit? Or are you a poetry guru?) Perhaps you could contribute where you feel the magazine lacks. Another possibility to consider is volunteering to be an editorial assistant or even the editor at some stage. Fresh ideas and technical 'know how' are gratefully received! In fact, the Collective needs this to maintain a relevant cutting edge.

As for the competitions, these are run for several reasons. Primarily they are to encourage and mentor writers, especially those not yet published. They encourage people to write regularly (we all get slack) and let

people try writing in different genre other than their natural preference. When those more skilled enter it gives newer writers a model to aspire to.

The competition levels may bother you. *Do I really have to start on Level One?* you may ask. Normally writers progress through the levels and are promoted as they start to win or be highly placed consistently. But the NZCW Committee recognises some newer members may already be writing at a high level. If this is you, send us samples of two or three genre and we will place you on the level we believe best suits you.

Which brings us to the issue of judging...

The judge's aim to encourage writers to develop their craft. They are not perfect and some have not had formal training but have been chosen because of the quality of their own writing, their willingness to develop themselves and their deep desire to help others. Not only that, judging writing can be very subjective, unlike judging a maths or science competition where there are clear constants. (Two plus two is always four and H<sup>2</sup>O is the chemical formula for water for example.)

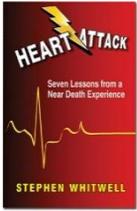
Writing styles preferred vary between judges just as they do between publishing houses. (And consider the differences between NZ and US spelling and use of commas!) Nevertheless, there is much to be gained from the judge's comments. Not only do entrants see the comments in the magazine but each receives a personal critique emailed to them, often with more-detailed comments. Other help is available if the entrant asks.

When judging, the aim is to be positive and give tips for encouraging the writer. Normally judges try to start and end with a positive comment and sandwich specific corrections and suggestions in the middle. This approach is also valid for critiquing in local writer's groups. If this is an area that interests you, perhaps you could volunteer to help with judging—fresh input is always welcome.

*To be continued...*

## Library Corner

### Featured Book Review



#### Heart Attack

By Stephen Whitwell

Reviewed by Julia Martin

Stephen Whitwell's life-changing moment occurred in June 2014 when he suffered a massive heart attack. At age 57, he suffered two near-death experiences, fortunately escaping becoming a fatality statistic.

Stephen recounts with honesty and occasional humour the progression of his heart attack, the medical treatment he received, and the slow path to recovery. He includes helpful information about heart problems and gives well-researched advice for preventing and minimising heart attacks.

Stephen claims his purpose in writing the book is to inspire people to live a healthier and more purposeful life; and above all that they'll find the amazing grace and peace that comes only from being in a relationship with Jesus Christ.

In the latter part of his book, Stephen deals with seven lessons he learned from his near-death experience. The lessons cover topics such as being prepared for the unexpected both in practical and spiritual terms. These seven lessons have relevance not just for medical crises, but for all kinds of life-changing events that can strike anyone at any time.

Stephen doesn't preach, but skilfully weaves his personal Christian faith and testimony throughout his story. This book is practical and easy to read, and as the author warns: It could save your life!

Published by DayStar Books.

## Congratulations to Dennis McLeod

Hearty congratulations to Dennis McLeod whose book, *Small Beginnings*, has scored First Place in the Bookvana Book Awards Christian Inspirational category.

As the Bookvana Book Awards is run by the i310 Media Group in Los Angeles, Dennis knew the competition would be stiff. To be told he'd won was extremely exciting.

"I still can't get my head around it," he says.



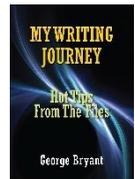
Dennis with his award-winning book

## Additions to the Library

Thanks to George Brant for donating:

### My Writing Journey

—a 44-page booklet with notes and tips taken from George's own files to help aspiring writers with their writing journey. For more details, contact George on [bryantgw@xtra.co.nz](mailto:bryantgw@xtra.co.nz)



## NZCW Writers' Groups

### AUCKLAND – WEST

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# Competition Results

## Under 20s

Judge:

**Vicki Nogaj**

**Requirement:** ‘Message in a Bottle’. Write your message in an informal letter format addressed to a stranger or someone you know. Be creative. You could even put it in a bottle and send it as a gift. 300 words.

## First Place



**Bonnie  
Smithies**

of Christchurch  
(18 years old)

Dear stranger,

After I write this letter I’m going to put it into a bottle and set it afloat in the sea. Where it will end up is a mystery. If you’re reading this then my objective has been realised. Someone has found my message.

I don’t know who you are or where you hail from. I don’t know what your life looks like and how you spend your days. I do know this, however – you are a wonderful human being.

I guess the reason I’m writing this letter is to send you a little bit of joy and confidence today. Another human being in the world (that’s me!) is thinking about you, not knowing anything about who you are. I do know that you are awesome. You are unique and amazing and wonderful because you have been made in the image of God.

I believe that God made each of us humans in His likeness for a reason that is greater than anything we could ever imagine. He was thinking of you before he created the

world. His heart is for you and not against you.

I don’t care whether you’re a grandmother, a four-year-old or a middle aged bachelor – you are amazing. I don’t want you to ever forget that! You are beautiful and wonderful and incredible because you are a person and because you were given life by the Creator Himself.

May you find truth and joy. Thank you for reading.

Your new friend

## Judge’s Comments

*The tone of the letter was lovely and sincere and carried a heart-warming, positive message that is universally relevant. It was also free of ‘Christianese’ so would appeal to the unsaved and is evangelical. I was close to tears as the imagined recipient of this letter. I pictured myself finding it washed up on the Mount beach and reading the wonderful message of love and acceptance of who I uniquely am in God’s eyes. Thank you Bonnie.*

## Level One

Judge:

**Debbie McDermott**

**Requirement:** Write a new and modern parable or allegory that 12-16 year olds can relate to. Use appropriate language and imagery that will clearly convey the Christian message you want to get across to this age group. 450 words.

## General Comments

*I commend the five people who entered this competition. It takes a lot of thought and creativity to write a parable or allegory that clearly highlights a spiritual truth or virtue. You all made a good effort in this regard.*

*A parable or allegory is usually a story with definite characters and a strong takeaway message (e.g. Pilgrim's Progress; the Sower and the Seeds). The message can be obvious in the story itself—as was the case with Pamela's entry—or it can be revealed at the end in a strong concluding paragraph. Whichever method you use, it is vital that your reader fully understands your takeaway message by the time they have finished reading the piece. To this end, avoid using Christianese, especially if you are writing to a mixed or non-Christian audience.*

## First Place



**Lynda  
Otter**  
of Tamatea, Napier

### The Parable of the Two Families

The teenagers cried out to Him, “Who are we?”, “Where do we fit?” “What is our purpose?” He replied,

“There were once two families. The first family was very rich. The father worked long hours at his own successful company and made a great deal of money. He had one child, a beautiful girl now aged 15 years and he gave her everything she wanted. Every morning she looked in the mirror to examine her face for pimples and to check that her hair was perfect. Her beauty and her father’s money made her the most popular girl in school. Everyone wanted to be her friend. She chose her boyfriends, she owned the school halls with her fam.

One day, her father’s business failed. They had to move to a smaller house. Her father fell into despair and continued to neglect his daughter. She was no longer on fleek. Her father could not buy her the iPhone 6S Plus

she so desperately wanted. She became an embarrassment to her friends tbh. They began to avoid her and her boyfriend broke up with her. She was totes cancelled. She no longer knew where she fit. She no longer knew who she was. She no longer knew how to live her life – so she ended it.

The other family, who lived in a modest home, also had a 15 year old daughter. Her father worked hard at his own business but kept his hours short as his daughter was more important to him than anything else. He was always available to her and gave her everything she needed. She was a quiet but confident girl. Every morning they had breakfast together and talked about the coming day.

She was not well known by the cool kids but her kindness earned her the love and respect of the underdogs. She looked for ways to help them with their study and she listened to their problems. She had a smile for everyone.

In the economic climate of the day, her father’s business also failed. They stayed in their home. She wore her same old Levi’s and was happy with her Nokia Lumia 635. The father continued to love his daughter and she felt secure. She knew where she fit into her world. Her life was just as good as it had always been. Her purpose was unchanged and she remained content.”

He continued, “I love you. Your identity is in me and you are acceptable to me. You have purpose in the work I give you to do. Trust in my love and I will be with you in the school grounds, on the street and throughout your life.”

### Judge’s Comments

*Congratulations to Lynda for meeting the requirements of this competition exceptionally well. Her parable is original and deeply impacting, and her takeaway message is clearly conveyed to the reader in the final paragraph.*

*The flow, language and sentence structure of the piece is also excellent—though a footnote providing definitions of the modern slang / ‘text-speak’ words would have been useful for this old timer!*

*Grammar and punctuation are very good overall. The only corrections needed are:*

- *Para 1—replace the comma after ‘cried out to Him’ with a colon, and delete the rogue comma after “Who are we?”*
- *Para 1— replace the comma after ‘He replied’ with a colon. Then make ‘He replied:’ the beginning of paragraph 2.*
- *Paras 2-5—opening speech marks need to be inserted at the beginning of paras 2-5. NB: When lengthy monologue is broken up into several paragraphs, each paragraph must begin with speech marks, but ONLY the final paragraph is to begin and end with speech marks, to show the person has finished talking.*

## Second Place



**Pamela  
Lowrey**  
of Havelock North

### **A Backyard Parable**

(An earthly story with a heavenly meaning)

“Hi guys!” Someone once said that if you write “God” backwards, it spells ‘dog.’ That reminds me of a true story about a dog called Mac. The Lord often speaks to us and teaches us through simple day to day occurrences in our lives if we are listening and learning to recognise His voice.

Mac is a huge brown stripey ridgeback dog belonging to the neighbours. He is a very quiet dog with large soulful eyes. He never strays and is very loyal. Whenever I have a large soup bone I give it to him.

One day I sensed the Lord speaking to my

spirit. ‘I note that you take care to give Mac good big bones with smooth edges so he doesn’t choke over them, and you wrap them in foil presenting them freshly cooked.’

Mac loves them. He starts slobbering as soon as he sees me coming with his silver gift and rushes up to the wire fence. He raises his head, sniffs the air expectantly, looks at me with bright brown eyes, wags his ropey tail enthusiastically and can hardly wait for his bone. But when I say, ‘Sorry Mac, no bones today!’ he looks sad and dejected, drops his head and hangs his tail down like a long limp piece of rope.

Then the Lord impressed upon me, ‘That’s just like you. I wait patiently for you. I hear you coming. I recognise your footsteps. Sometimes you come with a gift for me and then you leave as quickly as you came ... But when you come just out of a sense of duty and have nothing to give me, then I feel just like big Mac feels – sad and dejected. I long for you to spend your gift of time with me, to linger and not rush away, to enjoy our special time ... just you and me together.’

Today as we get ready to celebrate Communion, remember the story of young Samuel how the Lord woke him and called his name three times. Samuel thought it was Eli the priest calling him until Eli realised that it was the Lord speaking to Samuel and told him what to answer. That was a watershed moment in Samuel’s life when he began to realise the destiny that God had for him. He sat listening to what the Lord told him to say and faithfully delivered it word for word to Eli.

So now, let us enjoy a special time in His presence at the table, lingering, learning to listen to His voice --- just you and the Lord together.

### **Judge’s Comments**

*Pamela has met the requirements of this competition very well. Beginning her parable with a palindrome (that is, ‘God’ written*

*backwards spells 'dog') is an excellent opening as it immediately captures the reader's attention. Her parable is easy for children to relate to, and the message it contains starts becoming clear halfway through the piece rather than just at the end. This, I feel, strengthens the story's impact.*

*While the takeaway message of Pamela's parable is strong and clear, the second to last paragraph on Samuel seems out of place because it is not part of the parable itself. Replacing this paragraph with one that elaborates on what it means to linger in God's presence would work better. Apart from this suggestion the piece flows nicely.*

*Besides some unnecessary speech marks and spaces, the only corrections needed are:*

- Para 1—Put 'God' in single quote marks.
- Para 1—'occurances' should be spelled 'occurrences'
- Para 6—insert 'and' after 'young Samuel'.

## Third Place



**Clare  
Matravers**  
of Whangerei

### The Parable of the Lost Son

“Dad, I want to have my inheritance now, while I’m still young enough to enjoy it,” Jake said.

Jake’s father frowned but didn’t argue. “I’ll deposit the money in your bank account tomorrow.”

A week later, Jake left home in his new, souped-up Nissan Skyline.

“See you, Dad,” he shouted out the car window, “I’m off to Auckland.”

At first life was great for Jake as he splashed his wealth around and made lots of friends.

His flash inner city apartment soon became party central. He spent his nights partying, and his days sleeping.

But before long, he had spent all the cash, maxed out the credit cards and had to sell the car. When the money disappeared, so did his friends.

Jake managed to find a minimum-wage job in a greasy takeaways shop, but could no longer afford the apartment, and since his friends didn’t want to know him, ended up living on the streets.

One day, up to his elbows in chip fat, and having nothing but left-over takeaways to eat, Jake realised his dad’s farm workers were better off than him. So he quit the job and hitchhiked home. He could hardly expect to be treated like a son but perhaps his dad would employ him.

As he trudged along the road leading to the family farm, he saw his father standing at the gate. Expecting a real telling off, Jake hung his head. Would Dad tell him to get lost? But when he looked up, his father was running towards him with open arms.

“Welcome home, son!” His father threw his arms around him.

“I’m so sorry for what I’ve done.” Jake couldn’t bring himself to look at his dad. “I don’t expect you to treat me like a son but do you have any jobs going on the farm?”

But instead his father organised a party and sent out invitations on Facebook. “I want to celebrate my lost son’s return,” he told the invited guests.

His older brother heard the party going on. He sent a text to his dad.

*What’s the celebration for? When he found out it was for his no-good brother, he was not impressed. I’ve been a perfect employee and you’ve never given me so much as a gold star. What’s the story?*

*You've always been here with me and everything I have is yours, his dad replied. But we had to party up large because your brother was lost but now he's come home.*

Our heavenly Father is always thrilled to welcome home a repentant and humble sinner.

Based on Luke 15:11-32

### Judge's Comments

*Had Clare met the first key requirement of this competition, which was to write a **new** and modern parable, I would have awarded her a higher placing. Her rewrite of this well-known parable is excellent, as is her use of the sort of modern language and expressions a teenager can easily relate to. She has also been very creative in bringing a contemporary Kiwi flavour to this parable, and there is a very good flow to the whole piece.*

*With regards to the conclusion, making it only one sentence long lowers the impact of the parable's message. Unchurched youngsters may also be unfamiliar with words like 'heavenly Father', 'repentant' and 'sinner'. To make it easier to understand, it could be rewritten as:*

*'God is just like Jake's father? He forgives us of the horrible things we've done and welcomes us back with open arms.'*

*Grammar and punctuation are excellent. Well done.*

## Level Two

Judge:

**Janice Gillgren**

**Requirement:** BLOG ARTICLE—Write a blog article on any subject that interests you. Name a website that you could imagine your blog being published on, and write in an appropriate style for that website. 350-400 words.

## General Comments

*Well done Eion and John for 1st and 2nd place, respectively. Your blogs were written appropriately for your named websites.*

*Spelling is great in all entries, with reasonably minor punctuation errors, or some complicated sentences that could be simplified. Word counts were also well within set limits.*

*Take note of titles, which pique interest for readers and enable blogs to be more readily found by search engines.*

## First Place



**Eion  
Field**

of Hamilton

## EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL LIFE

Extra-terrestrial life, or life elsewhere in the universe, is a subject often raised when new planets, stars or asteroids are discovered during space exploration. Could life exist somewhere in the cosmos besides Earth?

As is well known, so far no life or evidence of it has been found in the solar system, and the only chance of life beyond it rests in the mathematics of probability. With so many millions of stars and planets in the galaxies (astronomers prognosticate) there must be at least one with life-supporting properties and features similar to Earth.

The difficulty with the search for life "out there" and with space exploration in general is of course the enormous distances and the months of travel time it takes, even to reach our neighbouring planets. Space-craft, unmanned up to now, have reached and orbited some of the solar system planets relaying valuable information back to Earth.

None of this data gives any real indication of life – in any form – outside of our planet. Mars, perhaps the best hope, has not yielded so much as a flicker that might indicate a living organism somewhere on its surface.

Water or ice may be present on Mars, but it is a common substance. While water is necessary for life to exist, it is far from sufficient; many other factors must prevail also even for simple life forms to survive. Rather than water being a sign of life, the reverse is true; life is a sure sign of the presence of water.

Enough is known about Mars to say now with reasonable certainty that it is home to nobody, but some are still saying it may once have been. This is non-scientific conjecture, relying on assumptions for which there is little real evidence.

New discoveries of planets, many light-years away from our world, are still being made, and their general features can be identified. But it is impossible at this “remove” to know if these newly found planets have any of the unique features which give Earth her ability to support and perpetuate life, and enable it to flourish.

<http://www.popsoci.com/>

## Judge's Comments

*Hi Eion.*

*Well done for gaining 1st place.*

*Considering you appear to be challenging the basic assumptions of the Popular Science site, which seems very optimistic about life on other planets, you have written in a way that fits the site's style, without overtly disagreeing with them.*

*There are some small errors in grammar and punctuation. For example, most parenthetical phrases longer than a few words, such as 'and with space*

*exploration in general of course' (3rd para) are often better with a comma at the start and end to reduce confusion.*

*The 2nd sentence in the 2nd paragraph could be simplified by changing the order: 'Astronomers prognosticate that, with so many millions...' (Add another comma after 'galaxies').*

*An interesting read, and I hope you will send it to them.*

## Second Place



**John  
Lindsay**  
of Christchurch

## The History of a Garden

The garden was beautiful. Lush growth, fresh blooms, healthy soil.

Everything had been carefully selected and established, ready to be nurtured and enjoyed by the young gardener who had found himself so attracted to this landscape.

Despite his lack of experience, he felt ready for the task, confident it would thrive in his hands. He promised to devote himself to the garden whatever happened, whether it bloomed or struggled through adversity.

His enthusiasm carried him through those early days and despite his mistakes the garden flourished, rewarding him with exquisite flowers and tasty fruits.

How he enjoyed the toil, eagerly tending the trees that offered refreshing shade and the lush grass that felt so cool and soft beneath his feet.

Such devotion took time and energy, but he gave willingly, remembering his vow and believing he had been given a high calling. The garden would bear testimony to his determination to stay true to his first love.

As time passed, the fruits of his labours created new responsibilities and he realised the garden demanded more than he had anticipated. He had to choose between caring for the garden and accepting responsibilities elsewhere.

The more he gave his energies to other interests, the less the garden seemed to prosper and satisfy him. While others did not seem to notice the changes, he felt discouraged. In his more honest moments he realised he had started to resent having to work so hard for diminishing rewards.

What had appeared so promising now seemed to wither under his touch.

This was not the future that had once filled his vision.

An older, wiser gardener recognised the symptoms and correctly deduced the cause; too much time spent outside the property.

He took the younger man to his own garden, shared his own experiences, offered ideas for restoring the impoverished soil and feeble vegetation.

The disheartened worker recognised the value of the advice and returned to his garden with new eyes and fresh commitment.

He was soon rewarded as the flowers and trees began to flourish again, offering greater joy and satisfaction than he had ever known.

Eventually he grew old and lost his former energy. But although he now kept a simpler garden, it displayed a gentle beauty in which he rested content and fulfilled.

John Lindsay

For blog: [www.2equal1.com](http://www.2equal1.com)

### Judge's Comments

*Hi John. I have awarded your blog 2nd place. This thoughtful allegory suggests to me valuable lessons of devotion, pleasure and satisfaction in our work, and especially*

*being able to receive instruction and guidance when warranted. The latter part of your blog isn't as descriptive as the first part, but still fits the whole.*

*Your blog's style appears suitable to your chosen website.*

*A title more suitable to your blog's style would be more appealing, such as 'For the love of my garden.'*

*While shorter paragraphs and sentences are often preferred these days, I think your blog could benefit from varying the paragraph lengths rather than most of them being the same length. It is a lot more natural to read.*

*As the website also welcomes blogs for writers around the world, I hope you will give it a go and send yours*

## Third Place



**Karen  
Belk**

of Takapuna, Auckland

## Mary Cassatt

I believe Mary Cassatt must be considered as one of the greatest American women artists of all time.

Born into a wealthy family in Pennsylvania, America in 1844, Mary grew up in a world that was slowly changing their beliefs towards women. As a woman artist she had many obstacles to overcome that would affect her work.

The Women's Rights Movement was forming in America and Europe. The Civil War enlisted men from the education system, leaving plenty of opportunity for women to enrol and receive training.

Her wealthy background helped Mary to be educated and travel to Europe with her family as a child. Years later she was able to travel again to Europe with other family members and eventually on her own.

France called her and it was here that she began to be recognised as a painter. Paris still had restrictions on women, including the fact that respectable women were not allowed to go out to cafes to paint, unlike their male counterparts who could. Another example of discrimination was that the jury at the painting salons were always men and showed discrimination towards women artists.

These restrictions could have had a major effect on Mary's work but I think she had the ability to turn the negatives into positives. Mary painted what was close to her heart, family and in particular women. Women going about their daily lives.

What astonishes me about Mary's paintings is that although she never married or had children she was able to portray the intimacy between mother and child onto the canvas. Mary would paint them in everyday household chores in ordinary locations. Not only was the intimacy between mother and child apparent but Mary brought alive through colour, ordinary locations like a bathroom setting.

I love her paintings; combining intimacy, colour and everyday life together. I also admire her as a woman, whom in a male dominated world was still able to accomplish and achieve her dreams as an artist.

Although Mary and I face different restrictions and discriminations as women in different centuries, Mary Cassatt has given me the encouragement to persist and pursue my dreams.

## Judge's Comments

*Hi Karen.*

*Well done for gaining 3rd place. Your article is generally well written, although I can't comment on whether the style is suitable to a particular blog site (which was one of the requirements for this competition), as you didn't name specific sites.*

*Some suggested corrections:*

*2nd para: 'World' is a singular noun, so 'their beliefs' should actually be 'its beliefs'.*

*In the last sentence in 8th para (I also admire her as a woman whom, in a male-dominated world, was still able...'), the word 'whom' is wrong in this context. 'Whom' is the person on the receiving end of action; 'who' refers to the one doing an action. (She is, later in the sentence, achieving her dreams; so that is the action.)*

## Level Three

**Judge:**

**Ruth Linton**

**Requirement:** Write a TRAVELOGUE about a place you have been or know well from family or friend's reports. The article must appeal to, and meet the needs of the 65+ age group which is a strongly-emerging market. Supply two clear photos which will be printed as magazine space allows. Max 500 words.

## General Comments

*Good travelogues whet the reader's appetite for travel. Based on their own trips, using the 'first person' pronouns 'I' and 'we', all entrants wrote in an authentic, interest-capturing way. The target audience was 65-year-plus retirees. Entries hinted at this but more explicit emphasis could have been given.*

*Good travelogues report on the sights of the country as well as cultural aspects and interaction with local people. Julia's entry*

*was particularly successful here. Discussing negative and positive aspects of the trip provide a balanced and safe view of the destination.*

*I particularly enjoyed Lois's travelogue set in New Zealand. It stirred memories of my own trip and made me want to go again. That is a mark of a good travelogue!*

## First Place



**Julia  
Martin**  
of Cambridge

## Noumea for Seniors

From the moment we saw him waiting on the dock we felt confident we'd made the right choice for our six hour tour of Noumea. Fernando's Tours and Transport is a private tour company I'd discovered online and it came highly recommended by reviewers.

On board ship the cruise companies promote their own excursions and labour the point that independent tour operators can be risky; they may not turn up, or even worse, they may not return tourists to the ship on time prior to sailing. We took the risk and it paid off with a personalised tour at a reasonable cost.

With a hearty welcome and a beaming smile, Fernando placed colourful leis round our necks and whisked the four of us away to his air-conditioned Mercedes minibus. There he explained options for our tour and was willing to tailor a programme to suit our interests and level of fitness.

Instead of queuing in the blazing heat to board a crowded bus with a fixed itinerary,

we were up and away on an adventure with a fun-loving, passionate and informative guide eager to show us his city and surrounds. As it was a Monday, many of the places of interest, such as museums, were closed, but we weren't concerned as we were more eager to experience the outdoor sights of this beautiful city.

From stunning vantage points we viewed and took pictures of the capital of New Caledonia.

With a diverse French-speaking population, Noumea has been described as 'a slice of the French Riviera in the South Pacific.'

From his Melanesian background, Fernando was able to explain local customs and culture. He showed us plants that had traditional medicinal properties used by local people in the past.

Aware of our age, he catered for our every need; providing bottles of cool water, viewing positions in the shade, and rest stops as required.

Mid-morning we stopped at a French patisserie for coffee and a delectable range of culinary delights.

With a mix of French and Melanesian culture, Noumea is both sophisticated and casual, classy and simple. We passed mansions of the rich, and in contrast, noticed make-shift shelters in the bush occupied by squatters living in poverty. We visited St Joseph Cathedral built in 1888 by convict labour, while up in the hills we saw women filling bottles for their households from fresh water springs.

The highlight of the tour, undoubtedly, was when Fernando took us to his modest home for lunch with his lovely wife Soanna, and Lorenzo, their young son. While she served a delicious meal using local produce and

traditional recipes, Fernando entertained us by singing and playing his guitar. With his infectious enthusiasm, Fernando oozed 'joie de vivre' and made us feel like we were part of his family.

All too soon our tour was over and it was with a rich cultural experience and unforgettable memories.

### Judge's Comments

*'Human' interest is the highlight of this article. Without a doubt Fernando, a wonderful ambassador for his country, was responsible for making the tour so enjoyable.*

*Julia covers the physical aspects of this French Melanesian country and gives us insights into food, customs and culture. Unscrupulous tour operators are a negative to be avoided. Her tour was modified to cater for the tourist's age and physical ability. Visiting the guide's home and sampling native food was especially appealing to the older tour members.*

*Two clear colour photos full of human interest were provided which illustrated her article well. (Unfortunately, due to lack of space in this issue of the magazine, these could not be published.)*

*I have two suggestions:*

- 1. In the final sentence of para. 4 the word 'while' joins two unrelated ideas. 'While' gives a sense of comparison but the ideas are not being compared. I suggest using a conjunction such as 'and'.*
- 2. In the first sentence of para.5, the word 'undoubtedly' is clumsy where it is. Use it to begin the sentence, or just omit it.*
- 3. Footnotes giving basic contact information and pricing should have been supplied.*

## Second Place



**Janet  
Pointon**  
of Auckland

### To Norway and Russia with Love

There's something exciting and breath-taking about a fourteen day cruise to the Balkan States. In March, 2015 my husband and I flew for nine hours from Auckland to Singapore, staying there two nights to explore some of the city. We then flew to Copenhagen (about 12 hours) and took a train from the airport to Copenhagen city. After making sure we had the varying currencies for the Balkan countries we hired a taxi to the port where our ship, the MSC Sinfonia, was berthed.

We boarded and were given an identity card we needed for leaving and returning to the ship. These cards had 250 Euros locked in from our credit card which covered all gratuities and payments for anything on board. We were given the bill before we left and luckily had some money refunded. Others needed to pay more.

Our comfortable outside cabin with adjoining bathroom had a large window and huge bed. We sailed out of Copenhagen and our first and only experience of lifeboat drill took place. There were not many English speakers amongst the passengers so every announcement was delivered in five languages, English being first, but as they gabbled on to the next one we would have liked it repeated!

We felt no noticeable ship movement at all—even with a stormy looking sea as these ships have a stabilizing system.

The views from our cabin window were beautiful and the room always a comfortable

temperature. However, we needed to wrap up with our coats and hats and scarves when on deck ... I took a photo of people lying on the deck chairs in the sun with their coats and hats on. It looked so funny, but necessary.

Each cabin was provided with a daily programme informing us when the ship would berth and leave that day's port. The bulletin also gave information as to which dress code would be appropriate each evening if we chose to dine in one of the restaurants. We had the choice of dressing for dinner or eating on the top deck in the cafeteria where the varying menus were extensive and delicious. A different show was presented each evening as well as many other ship activities.

We arrived in Bergen, Norway, on May 19 at 11am with a temperature of about 15C. Norway is beautiful with all the mountains, snow and many waterfalls.

We sailed to three ports in Norway and then back to Copenhagen via Warnamunde (the gateway to Berlin). Our next ports were eastwards to Sweden, Estonia, and St Petersburg. We had arranged and paid for our excursions before leaving New Zealand and all in all this was a wonderful trip I can thoroughly recommend. We may return!

MSC ships are reasonably priced, especially if purchased through their website. We are teased weekly as they offer us half price trips throughout the Mediterranean and Europe. We have recently returned from a ship which sailed from Rome to Israel. But that's another story!

### Judge's Comments

*Although not specifically highlighted there are several comments showing suitability for seniors: warm, comfortable cabins, a wide range of food offered, dress codes explained and a practical way of paying for on-board items.*

*Janet provided two suitable clear photos showing people enjoying the tour. The ports and countries visited are listed but there is little mention of outstanding sights or comments on the different cultures observed at the ports. The life boat drill does hint at the different nationalities and languages on board ship though.*

*I suggest three minor changes:*

- 1. In para.1 '...varying currencies...' would be better as '...various currencies...' Varying has a sense of comparison, perhaps that the currencies varied from day to day, whereas various implies each currency was different.*
- 2. Also in para 1, use the word 'into' when going from Copenhagen airport into the city itself. 'To' gives the sense of moving from one place to another whereas 'into' implies you are in the same place but going further into it.*
- 3. Paras.7 and 8 both begin with the word 'We...' which is repetition.*

*The final paragraph gives details of the tour. It would have been helpful to include website or other contact details. The last two sentences are indeed 'another story' and should be omitted.*

## Third Place



**Lois  
Farrow**  
of Christchurch

### Touring the Top of the South Island

Driver Paddy Gillooly keeps us well informed as we drive along the tidal plain of Golden Bay, north of Nelson. The tide will recede more than nine kilometres today, he

tells us, and in some places it goes out faster than you can walk.

We leave the small town of Collingwood at 12 noon. Our Farewell Spit Eco Tour will take six and a half hours, and timing is critical as we must be on Farewell Spit at low tide.

We pass cattle and dairy farms and pass through the remnants of Puponga, a once-thriving coal town established in 1899 where a small locomotive called Donald transported coal from mine to boats. Strata angles so sharply down hill that to follow the coal seam the mine often reached under the sea. On stormy days miners could feel reverberations from the waves above. In 1974 the mine closed.

Puponga Farm Park occupies a large triangle of land where the Spit begins, and is owned by the Government to provide a buffer for the delicate ecology of the area.

We appreciate the privilege of being on the Eco Tour when we reach the highly protected Farewell Spit Nature Reserve as we drive through the 'no public access' gate and get taken to the top of the hill to view Farewell Spit. Waves crash against the rocky outcrop, the northern tip of the South Island.

Public Access is allowed four kilometres along the Spit, but private tours can go more than 30 km to the lighthouse. Farewell Spit Eco Tours are the only company allowed access to the 6000-strong Gannet Colony in the appropriate season. At its narrowest point the Spit is only one kilometre wide. We drive on both sides and do wheelies in the soft sand. At Fossil Point we see seals and have time to find fossils as we wander around the rocks below the towering cliffs.

Over 90 species of birds inhabit this area, and as we drive along Farewell Spit we spot black backed gulls, shags, oystercatchers, gannets, and several species of terns.

The lighthouse is shrouded in scaffolding and protective wrap as workmen undertake a

maintenance program. We are served a cuppa in the lighthouse keeper's cottage, view historic information, and have time to wander the extensive grounds where six original houses remain and Maori carvings tell legends of the past. First light shone from this point in 1897, and the lighthouse still operates today.

On the return journey we stop to climb wind-sculpted sand dunes for panoramic views of the ocean to the north, and Golden Bay to the south. Further along the beach, Paddy knows the exact place and moment to stop for sunset magic in the rock pools and incoming tide.

Return timing is perfect as we find the Collingwood Hotel about to serve their weekly spit roast. A delicious end to a wonderful day, in harmony with the tides, and travelling in style and comfort while regaled with informative and entertaining commentary.

Farewell Spit Eco Tours: Various tours depart Collingwood daily when tides and weather allow.

Cost: Varies per tour. Approx \$150 pp for Eco Tour

Website: [www.farewellspit.com](http://www.farewellspit.com)

Bookings essential as numbers are limited.

### **Judge's Comments**

*I thoroughly enjoyed reading this travelogue. Having done the trip I kept thinking: What about... and what about...?*

*The title supplied lacked character giving the impression of travelling a more extensive area than Farewell Spit, which is a small rather-special area in the northwest. The tour operators provided an excellent service but Lois did not mention how suitable it was for senior citizens.*

*Using the present tense is unusual but Lois did it well keeping it consistent throughout. It*

gave a sense of freshness to the article. Lois provided two clear colour photos. Including one of the lighthouse area, and having people in them, would have made them more interesting.

Several corrections or changes are needed: In para.1 Paddy Gillooly's words should be in speech marks.

1. In para. 3 the word 'pass' is used twice in quick succession. Leave the first one (We pass cattle...) but change the second to 'drive' ('and drive through Puponga...')
2. In para. 5 put a full stop after '...Farewell Spit Nature Reserve'. The rest of the paragraph explains the reason she appreciated the Tour.
3. The ideas in para.6 would flow better if some of the sentences were rearranged.

Put the sentence about Fossil Point immediately after the one about the gannet colony (which doesn't need to be capitalised as there are a number of colonies throughout NZ). The dimensions of the Spit and doing wheelies on both sides would conclude the paragraph or even be a paragraph on their own.

4. 'First light' in para. 8 normally means the first light of dawn. The sentence should begin '**The** first light ...'.

The final sentence of the last paragraph is very long and is not really a full sentence (the subject is missing). Begin the sentence with '**It's** a delicious end...'

Lois's footnote giving tour details is very well done. Using italics or a smaller font would distinguish it from the rest of the article.

**My heart is overflowing with a good theme; I recite my composition concerning the King; My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.**

—Psalm 45:1

A	U	T	O	B	I	O	G	R	A	P	H	Y		E		
R		E		A		D		E		S				S		
T		S		L		E		V		A		P	R	O	S	E
I		T		L				I		L					A	
C		I		A		T		E		M		N		Y		
L		M		D		R		W			P	O	E	M		
E		O				A							W			D
			N		N	O	V	E	L		L	I	S	T		E
E		I				E			I				R			V
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I		L				T	O	M	E		R		P	O	S	T
T				F		G		R		I		O				I
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R			S	C	I	E	N	C	E	F	I	C	T	I	O	N
I				T				K		Q			R			A
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**CODE  
CRACKER  
SOLUTION**

A-8	B-2	C-24
D-17	E-12	F-1
G-9	H-22	I-3
J-25	K-18	L-4
M-16	N-20	O-10
P-5	Q-15	R-21
S-11	T-6	U-23
V-13	W-26	X-7
Y-19	Z-14	

With warm thanks to Ruth Linton for the time and effort she puts in to sourcing and/or putting together these fun puzzles for our readers.

# Competitions for December 2016

Due by November 10th

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

**Font:** Times New Roman, 11 pt. **Heading:** Bold, 14 pt. **Line spacing:** single.

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

Send a high resolution photo of yourself in the event you are awarded a place.

NB: If you are not sure what level you're on, email the editor at [sddp@xtra.co.nz](mailto:sddp@xtra.co.nz)

## Level One—for members 20 years old and over

**Requirement:** CHRISTMAS DEVOTION—Write a devotion that has Christmas as its central theme. Include a short Bible verse at the beginning and a four-line poem at the end. 400 words.

**Email entry to:** Debbie McDermott at: [sddp@xtra.co.nz](mailto:sddp@xtra.co.nz)



*Debbie*

## Level Two—for members 20 years old and over

**Requirement:** Explain a well-known event on the Christian calendar (such as Communion, Pentecost, Easter etc) to a new Christian, in simple terms. 350-400 words.

**Email entry to:** Jan Pendergrast at [jan@roads-end.co.nz](mailto:jan@roads-end.co.nz)



*Jan*

## Level Three—for members 20 years old and over

**Requirement:** REVIEW a biography or historical novel you have read in the last two years. Make sure you consider the accuracy of dates, times and cultures in the review. Max 350 words not including book details such as title, author, publisher, etc. (*Resource Article: Write a Book Review by Rodman Philbrick, Page 7 The Christian Writer, Aug-Sep 2015.*)

**Email entry to:** Ruth Linton at: [ruthlinton2015@gmail.com](mailto:ruthlinton2015@gmail.com)



*Ruth*

## Under 20s—for members 7-19 years old

**Requirement:** Research the background story of a traditional Christmas carol and include your personal thoughts and reflections on this. 300 words.

**Email entry to:** Vicki Nogaj at: [nogaj@vodafone.co.nz](mailto:nogaj@vodafone.co.nz)



*Vicki*



# NZ CHRISTIAN writers



**STEPHEN WHITWELL** has ministered with the Elim Church for 31 years in Timaru, Nelson, Auckland, Taupo and now Tauranga. He writes a monthly e-letter, *Brief Word*, which circulates worldwide.

He has written and published personal study booklets, and his book *'Heart Attack – Seven Lessons From A Near-Death Experience'* was released in June 2015. This came out of his near-fatal heart attack during 2014.

He has a passion for helping people discover who they are, and for writing and speaking. He is married to Wendy and they have two adult children.

Check out his website and resources at:

[www.goodwords.nz](http://www.goodwords.nz)