

DECEMBER 2016 - JANUARY 2017

THE CHRISTIAN writer



BOOK REVIEW

Fun At Work

BY KATHRYN OWLER

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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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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CW Competitions

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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

President's Report

THANK YOU! to each and every single one of you for your encouragement towards NZ Christian Writers, especially through your membership, prayers and support. As your new President, I am deeply humbled by this opportunity to help lead and serve NZ Christian Writers into this new season. I am extremely grateful for the wonderful leadership of our previous President Janet Fleming, now Vice-President, for guiding our group into a nationwide collective of passionate and purposeful Christian writers. I also recognise our incredible legacy that has been pioneered by Bill Haythornthwaite, Sue Hungerford, Beth Walker, Julie Belding, Janet Pointon, and Jan Pendergrast, among so many others over the last 33 years.

During early 2015, our collective experienced a positive re-brand and re-vamped website that significantly helped to double our membership within 12 months. We also encouraged an 'Each One, Reach One' campaign to support organic membership growth. Thank you to all those members who reached out and invited a writer friend to join us. Please do continue our grassroots initiative to help grow our membership. In fact, you may meet another Christian writer at church or in your local community. Just simply encourage them to join us by

pointing them to our website:
www.NZChristianWriters.org

We are delighted to announce our upcoming Retreat 2017. Our keynote speakers will be Kaylene Subritzky, Iola Goulton, Sarah O'Neil, plus a selection of elective speakers to inspire, refresh, and upskill each of us on our writing journey. NZ Christian Writers will host 40 people with beautiful accommodation at the fantastic Flaxmill Retreat Centre in Whitianga. Dates are Thursday 27th April 2017–Sunday 30th April 2017. Please save the date, and secure your place by registering for our upcoming Retreat 2017 by emailing Jan Pendergrast: jan@roads-end.co.nz

On a personal note, my wife Sara-Maria and I have been blessed with the birth of our baby daughter Maxima. She continues to amaze and delight us as we see her grow. Her delightful giggles and smiles are absolutely adorable. Together we are loving this new season of parenthood and family life.

All the best for a fantastic Christmas and enjoyable New Year season.

Blessings,

Justin St Vincent



Justin and Sara-Maria with baby Maxima



NZ CHRISTIAN
writers
RETREAT



SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKERS TBC



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To book email: jan@roads-end.co.nz
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**BOOK
TODAY!**

Announcing NZCW 1st, 2nd & 3rd Place Competition Winners for 2016

Results are based on the number of entries submitted and the total number of points awarded for the year.

LEVEL ONE

1st Place

Lynda Otter

2nd Place

Pamela Lowry

3rd Place

Dennis McLeod

LEVEL TWO

1st Place

John Lindsay

2nd Place

Keith Willis

3rd Place

Shirley Jamieson

LEVEL THREE

1st Place

Julia Martin

2nd Place

Lois Farrow

3rd Place

Janet Pointon

UNDER 20s

1st Place

Bonnie Smithies

2nd & 3rd Place

No placings as Bonnie was the only entrant to this competition level for the year

Congratulations to all Prize Winners

Lynda Otter, Pamela Lowry and Dennis McLeod will now move up to

Level Two

John Lindsay, Keith Willis and Shirley Jamieson now qualify to move up to

Level Three

Do be encouraged to enter the 2017 competitions. Overall winners for the year in each level receive \$60 for 1st Place, \$50 for 2nd Place and \$40 for 3rd Place.

My Nativity

by Selina Chan

My first memories of Christmas were at the Waitakere Hospital, where my mum worked as a cleaner with her friend who was a midwife. She always invited everyone to go carol singing for the old folks in the geriatric ward. So us children would go along.

We would sing carols and hold candles and go from ward to ward spreading Christmas cheer. My younger brothers especially liked the holding candles bit. I learned *Hark the Herald Angels Sing*, *Silent Night*, *Away in a Manger*, *God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen* and *The First Noel*. I thought this Baby Jesus must have been pretty special to have all these songs sung about him.

We were all born in that hospital and while I don't have memories of that, I do remember the old folks at the hospital and how happy they were to see us children come to sing lullabies for them at their bedside each Christmas.



WRITING BRIEFS

Inspiring Christian writing of today and yesteryear—

by Frederick Swallow

Silent Night

Stille Nacht



The small Silent Night Chapel at the foot of the Austrian Alps in Oberndorf village.

This carol was written as a poem in Salzburg, Austria by Joseph Mohr of St Nicholas parish church. Hours before the 1818 Christmas Eve service he asked Franz Gruber the organist to set the text to music but the organ was out of action.

That very evening the text was sung by the church as a carol with Joseph Mohr playing the music on a guitar. The full ongoing story of *Stille Nacht* is told in music and words in 'Deutscher an Englischer' published by the Silent Night Association of Austria.

‘Silent Night’ Recognition

Submitted by Fred Swallow

In March 2011, The United Nations Educational and Cultural Organisation, a specialised agency of the UN based in Paris, declared the Christmas carol ‘Silent Night’ an intangible cultural heritage in recognition of its role in fostering cultural diversity.

Sung by Bing Crosby, it was then 3rd best-selling single.

—CNS Warsaw 4.6.2011

For a full report, go to www.catholicnews.com

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Do Miracles Still Happen?

By Carole Soole

Do miracles still happen
Like when Jesus was alive?
Is His power still active
To make dead folk rise?

God says He never changes
He’s steadfast, pure and true.
His love is overwhelming
He’s there for me and you.

He was with us at our birth
He’ll be with us at our death.
He’s immortal, He’s unique
He’s with us when we speak.

He will never leave us
He is always here
So miracles can happen
Anytime, anywhere!

Psalm 77:14

*You are the God who performs miracles;
you display your power among the peoples.*

The Little Man Meets Jesus

By Tanya Trower

Jericho was busy as a beehive today. Erin felt repeated tugs on her skirt as her young daughter Miriam tried to get her attention above all the hustle and bustle.

“Look Mama, there’s a man in that tree. He’s just a little man. I bet I’m taller than him. But then if I climbed a tree I could see better too. Can I Mama?”

Erin’s attention was split between attending to the chatter of her young daughter, and figuring out what all the commotion was about. She heard people nearby speaking about Jesus. At that

moment he turned and walked towards them and the sycamore tree which held Zacchaeus—a well-known but unpopular man.

“Mama Jesus is coming. Look.”

Jesus stopped beneath the tree so very close to them. He spoke. “Zacchaeus make haste and come down for today I must stay at your house.”

“Mama that man must be a friend of Jesus because Jesus is going to stay with him,” whispered Miriam.

Meanwhile the crowd became agitated with people shouting.

“Why are the people angry Jesus is speaking to the little man?” Erin explained that Zacchaeus was a tax collector and that people considered him a sinner.

Miriam watched mesmerised as Zacchaeus climbed down the tree and went forward to Jesus. “Look Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor and if I have taken anything by false accusation, I restore fourfold.”

“But Mama, he must be a kind man to be giving his things to the poor.”

Erin explained to her daughter that in meeting Jesus, Zacchaeus had decided to make good on all that he’d done wrong.

Jesus spoke, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”

“Mama what does that mean?”

“Zacchaeus was lost and Jesus came to save those who were lost darling.”

Based on the Bible story in Luke 19:1-9

Christmas Alone

(a Reminiscence)

By Deborah McDermott

Shopping. Carols by candlelight. Festive lights. Exchanging gifts. Feasting with family and friends on succulent meats, plum puddings and tipsy trifles. This has been my Christmas tradition for as long as I can remember. However, as December 2013 progressed, my heart started yearning for something more.

As the longing intensified, I began thinking I was being a bit odd. Then I paused to meditate on what the first Christmas night must’ve been like for Mary and Joseph, and knew I was not odd at all. Rejected and alone in that rustic stable, all they had to sustain them when Mary went into labour was the promise of God and each other. What relief they must’ve felt when Jesus was born. And what awe at knowing they held the Son of God in their arms. Surely everything they’d experienced that night seemed small by comparison.

So, when I awoke on Christmas Day knowing I would be spending most of it entirely alone, I rejoiced. My heart had been longing for a quiet Christmas—not because I was over the festive season traditions, but because I wanted to spend the day meditating on Jesus, being in His presence and simply loving Him. And that’s exactly how I spent my time. Not that I did anything particularly spiritual, like getting into high praise or worship; but it had been quite a while since I’d had such a peaceful and God-centred Christmas and it wouldn’t be the last.

GET CREATIVE

Many thanks to Pat Kerr for the following submission on 'All that glitters is not gold'

All that glitters is not gold

'He showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. It was shining with the glory of God and was bright like a very expensive jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.'

Wikipedia tells me that jasper is a kind of silica, opaque and impure, usually red, yellow, brown or green in colour, rarely blue. How interesting.

Bits of rock can be various colours, pretty dry, but sparkling and sharply coloured when moist. One of my favourite places for rocks is along the beaches of Lake Hawea in Central Otago. At our father's favourite fishing spot, the stones are mostly smooth, rounded and perfect for skimming across the water, creating an increasing arc of ripples. These stones, which are of many colours and patterns, sit well in garden features, especially when wet.

Lake Hawea's water is a brilliant turquoise blue most days. On windy days, most days, the blue is punctuated with white caps. On clear calm days, the water glitters like jewels spread out in the sun. With the mountains forming a majestic backdrop, and the blue sky cloudless, this place is magical. What a wonderful world we live in.

How much more wonderful can the new Jerusalem be, with jasper stone walls decorated with every kind of jewel and built on twelve huge foundation stones; a city made of pure gold, as pure as glass?

All that glitters is not gold!

(Revelation 21:11-14 CEV.)

© P Kerr 10-11-16

The next topic will be One day at a time...

Maximum 250 words for prose and 4 verses (6 lines or less per verse) for poetry. Include the words 'Get Creative' with your submission, as well as set the next 'Get Creative' topic. You may also include a picture with your piece if you wish.

Deadline: 10th January 2017

Email submissions for consideration to
sddp@xtra.co.nz

The Benefits of Bringing Your Talent to NZCW (Part 2)

By Ruth Linton

The NZ Christian Writers Website (www.nzchristianwriters.org) carries information from seminars, competition results, sources of extra information, and profiles of all financial members, usually with their preferred genre, books published and their favourite social media. It is a wonderful way to build relationships with writers of like mind. Books can be advertised, people with skills you require can be contacted. How convenient it would be to find an editor or publisher close by you!

Perhaps you could form a local group or have casual ongoing contact with nearby writers for mutual encouragement. Do you know a Christian who writes or would like to write who is not yet a member of the Collective? Encourage them to join. In these days there is a desperate need for wholesome writing in both the secular and sacred arenas.

Maybe you have a manuscript you would like read by several others before sending it to an editor. Other Collective members could provide a valuable service here.

There is the possibility of having your writing queries answered via email, the website or social media. Maybe you are doing a writer's course and have struck a problem. Again members of the Collective can help.

Some writers use the Web to promote current writing projects. There are

programmes to help with self-publishing. Other programmes help writers raise funds to help with their publishing and marketing costs. If this appeals to you, get involved with projects that interest you. In the Christian world what you sow you reap! (Galatians 6:9-10)

The need for Christian flavour in blogging cannot be over emphasised. Being involved in ongoing discussions could lead you to research a topic thoroughly to form a balanced view. Then there may be scope for a letter to the editor of a newspaper, an article in a church bulletin or even a submission to a parliamentary select committee. Our Christian worldview needs to be heard clearly and accurately in today's world.

When paying your annual subscription in August each year don't see it as just money. See it as an investment and use the offered resources fully.

For a Child is born to us,
a Son is given to us.
The government will rest on
His shoulders. And He will
be called: Wonderful
Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father,
Prince of Peace. His



government
and its
peace will
never end.

—Isaiah 9:6-7

George Motivating Writers

Report by Jan Pendergrast



George Bryant

George Bryant has held five three-hour seminars around the North Island, speaking about his writing journey and giving tips from his files. Thirty-three attended his seminar in

Whakatane, hosted by Ruth Corbett, in

November, with four in Gisborne the following day. During October, Tauranga mustered twenty and New Plymouth, nine. Another was in the Wesleyan Church in Auckland. New members are joining NZCW as a result.

Why is George holding these seminars? His vision is to boost Christian writing in New Zealand. He believes Christian writing is a ministry not being fully practised; one needing to be developed. The ‘how to’ of the craft can be learned elsewhere.

Writers are attending these seminars to ‘be encouraged’, ‘get cracking with writing’, ‘to scope writing from a Christian perspective’ and to ‘find out how to write for the secular world’.

Those attending have written a wide range of genre including novels, biographies, Bible studies, testimonies, family and Christian histories, children’s stories and ‘how to’ manuals.

George’s challenge to us is to write the Christian message for the secular world without Christian jargon (Christianese). He plans to hold more seminars next

year, especially in Wellington and the South Island. If you are interested in hosting a seminar in your area email bryantgw@xtra.co.nz.



One of George’s seminars

NZCW Writers’ Groups

AUCKLAND – WEST

Dianne Spain

Tel: (09) 626 3141

dispain54@gmail.com

CHRISTCHURCH

Dave Palmer

Mob: (027) 216 5743

davepalmer@xtra.co.nz

NORTHLAND

Janice Gillgren

Tel: (09) 433 9752

jangill1359@gmail.com

HAURAKI

John Milne

Tel: (07) 862 6861

johnrmilne38@gmail.com

TAURANGA

Jan Pendergrast

Tel: (07) 543 2147

jan@roads-end.co.nz

If you are keen on joining one of these groups, please feel free to contact the group leaders / hosts for further details.

Welcome to NEW MEMBERS

Glen Grant
Burnside, Christchurch

Barbara Guy
Tauranga

Ellaine Millard
Whakatane

Sydney Nesbitt
Tauranga

and RETURNING MEMBER

Joy Marks
Tauranga

REMEMBER

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

Need Professional Editing/Writing Services?

These NZCW members can help:

Janette Busch
E: WritingAnswers1@gmail.com
Mob: +64 21 233 7691

Marie Anticich
E: marieanticich@gmail.com

Sue Beguely
E: sue@triplecoilscript.co.nz
Mob: +64 27 533 0188

Selina Chan
E: selina_chan@hotmail.com
Mob: +64 21 104 3686

Christmas Knowledge Find-A-Word

All answers are found in the Find-a-word. See how many you can solve without using the Bible. References taken from the New King James Version.

Clues:

- Prophet who foretold the birth place of Christ (in chapter 5:2 of his prophecy).
- Name of Jesus' mother (Luke 1:27).
- She was unique because she was a...(Luke 1:27)
- Two watery places Jesus often visited, foretold by Isaiah in chapter 9 verse 1.
- In verse 2 of Isaiah 9 the inhabitants saw Jesus as this great thing.
- A gift from the Magi. (Matthew 2:11)
- Where Baby Jesus was taken for safety (Matthew 2:13).
- Paul, thinking of Christmas declared, 'Great is the mystery of godliness'. (I Timothy 3:16) There are 8 of the key words from this verse found in the puzzle. (8 letters, 5 letters, 9 letters, 6 letters, 4 letters, 6 letters, 2 omitted, 8 letters, 5 letters, 8 letters, 5 letters).

- The king who wanted to destroy Baby Jesus. (Matthew 2:13 & 16)
- Jesus was actually... in human flesh (1 Timothy 3:16).
- In the first Biblical prophecy of Jesus' coming these two words starting with 'H' are important. (Genesis 3:15)

All left-over letters will spell out two of Jesus' special names. (**Solution on page 15**)

S	D	T	S	E	F	I	N	A	M	D
P	E	O	I	M	M	Y	R	O	L	G
I	V	M	R	A	A	D	N	R	U	H
R	E	E	D	E	L	R	O	L	S	D
I	I	T	O	O	H	W	Y	E	L	E
T	L	P	G	A	L	I	L	E	E	V
N	E	Y	P	D	R	F	I	T	G	I
I	B	G	A	N	H	C	E	H	N	E
G	O	E	F	N	E	E	S	G	A	C
R	H	A	C	I	M	P	E	I	E	E
I	A	N	A	D	R	O	J	L	C	R
V	E	D	E	I	F	I	T	S	U	J

Literary Devices

Verisimilitude

In a literary work, verisimilitude is likeness to the truth; i.e. resemblance of a fictitious work to a real event even if it is a far-fetched one. Verisimilitude ensures that even a fantasy must be rooted in reality, which means events should be plausible to the extent that readers consider them credible enough to be able to relate them somehow to their experiences of real life.

Origin of Verisimilitude

The theory of verisimilitude comes from a Platonic and Aristotelian dramatic theory called 'mimesis'. According to this theory, a work of art should convince the audience by imitating and representing nature and having basis in reality. The playwright, conforming to the above-mentioned theory, had to draw themes from sources well-known to the common people of his time and maintain the unities of action, place and time. Besides, he had to bring a realistic union between the style and the subject.

Suspension of Disbelief

The theory of verisimilitude leads to the idea of 'suspension of disbelief' or 'willing suspension of disbelief', a term coined in 1817 by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. He was of the opinion that if a writer was able to fill his work with a 'human interest and a semblance of truth', the readers would willingly suspend or delay their judgment in relation to the doubtfulness of a narrative. In his *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge says:

'... It was agreed, that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic, yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination

that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith. Mr Wordsworth on the other hand was to propose to himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us...'

Verisimilitude Examples in Literature

1. Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver Travels* is a brilliant work of fantasy that may be considered as one of the best examples of verisimilitude. It achieves verisimilitude due to the fact it is one of the finest examples of political satire in English literature. Readers find in it a resemblance to a reality as they are aware of the fact that Swift satirises contemporary politics, religion, and English culture. For instance, criticising party politics in England, Swift writes:

'that for above seventy Moons past there have been two struggling Parties in this Empire, under the Names of Tramecksan and Slamecksan from the high and low Heels on their shoes, by which they distinguish themselves.'

Two rival political parties, the Whigs and the Tories, dominated England's political scene during Swift's time. In his novel the fictitious kingdom of Lilliput is dominated by two parties distinguished by the size of the heels of their boots. By relating the trivial disputes between the two Lilliputian parties, Swift relentlessly satirises the insignificant disputes of the two English parties of his period. He achieves verisimilitude through this.

2. Mark Twain in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* used Black American

vernacular to show realistically how the ‘negroes’ talked in real life:

‘I didn’t want to go back no more. I had stopped cussing, because the widow didn’t like it; but now I took to it again because pap hadn’t no objections... But by-and-by pap got too handy with his hick’ry, and I could’t stand it. I was all over with welts. He got to going away so much, too, and locking me in. Once he locked me in and was gone three days. It was dreadful lonesome.’

Twain successfully achieves verisimilitude or resemblance to a reality by introducing colloquialism in his narrative. The use of double negatives is quite evident in the above passage.

3. Drawing **analogies from real life** gives a semblance of truth to even fantastic ideas. For instance:

‘The white mares of the moon rush along the sky
Beating their golden hoofs upon the glass Heavens.’

In the above quote, Amy Lowell in her poem *Night Clouds* constructs an analogy between clouds and mares. She compares the movement of the white clouds in the sky at night with the movement of white mares on the ground. Such comparisons give her far-fetched ideas an air of reality.

Function of Verisimilitude

A literary work throws a lasting impression on its readers if it presents the theme in such a way that readers could relate to real life. Conformity to the theory of verisimilitude ensures the existence of reality in a literary work. Political satires are abundant with verisimilitude examples.

For more information on literary devices, visit <http://literarydevices.net>

NOTICE BOARD

Poems in the Waiting Room POETRY Competition

Unpublished poems. Up to 25 lines.
Open Theme

PRIZES:

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Second – \$ 150
Third – \$125

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\$5 per poem

Poems must be typed on one side of A4.
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19 Hunt Street, Dunedin 9013

DEADLINE:

28 February 2017

For full terms and conditions go to:

www.waitingroompoems.wordpress.com

Find-A-Word Solution

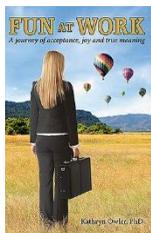
- | | | |
|---|----------|---------------|
| a. MICAH | b. MARY | c. VIRGIN |
| d. JORDAN and GALILEE | | e. LIGHT |
| f. GOLD | g. EGYPT | |
| h. MANIFEST, FLESH, JUSTIFIED, SPIRIT, SEEN, ANGELS, BELIEVED, WORLD, RECEIVED, GLORY (omitted were PREACHED and GENTILES). | | |
| i. HEROD | j. GOD | k. HEAD, HEEL |

Special Names: **IMMANUEL PRINCE OF PEACE**

Many warm thanks to Ruth Linton for the time and effort she puts in to sourcing as well as putting together these fun puzzles for our readers.

Library Corner

Featured Book Review



Fun at Work

By Dr Kathryn Owler

Reviewed by Julia Martin

For many people work is a necessary evil—more to be endured than enjoyed. But Dr Kathryn Owler doesn't see it that way. As a highly-qualified sociologist, she has researched the subject of wellbeing at work and believes work should be both satisfying and fun. She writes: '...for me fun at work represents a deep kind of satisfaction. It is the opportunity to do work that provides positive, meaningful challenge.'

Kathryn's book outlines her personal search for the perfect job. In each chapter she describes this tortuous journey over many years; starting with menial jobs as a teenager, followed by years of academic study and research, and then her work experience in a host of varied employment opportunities both in New Zealand and Australia. At the end of each chapter she summarises what she's learnt about her subject. She finally concludes that fun at work is a process and comes from being the person we're designed to be. It's a journey to find acceptance, joy and true meaning.

Some readers may not relate to her relentless search for job satisfaction as most of us don't have the option of constantly changing our place and type of work.

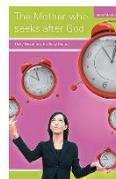
While her book comes from a secular point of view, it would have been interesting to see included the Christian perspective on this topic.

Additions to the Library

Many thanks to Laura Martin for donating several of her published books to the library, including:

The Mother Who Seeks After God

—Devotions for busy mums. Each daily meditation includes Scripture texts for further reading and reflective points to invigorate your day.



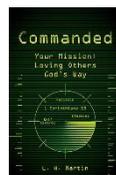
Love Is

—Loving Others God's Way. What is Love? Based on 1 Corinthians 13 this book is a month's worth of daily readings and devotions on God's love.



Commanded

—Your Mission: Loving Others God's Way. Everyone has a mission they are trying to achieve. If we are Christians we have a mission written in God's Word.



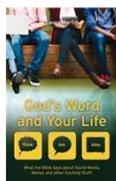
God's Word and You

—What the Bible says about family, friends and other important stuff. Find out how God is the same all powerful God for you as he was for them.



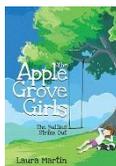
God's Word and Your Life

—Find out what the Bible says about social media, money and other exciting things like gaming, television, movies and even education!



The Apple Grove Girls

—a sweet story about the friendship, trials, prayer and faith of four friends, and how they wrestle with hard questions about prayer and God's will.



Copies of Laura's books can be purchased from www.Amazon.com and www.Bookdepository.com

Competition Results

Under 20s

Judge:

Vicki Nogaj

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

First Place



**Bonnie
Smithies**

of Christchurch
(18 years old)

The First Song Ever Broadcast Over Radio

O Holy Night is one of my favourite Christmas carols and it has a remarkable story behind it.

A French merchant of wine, Placide Cappeau, was asked by his priest to write a poem for a Christmas Eve service in 1847. He imagined himself a witness to Jesus's birth and wrote the poem "Cantique de Noel".

His Jewish friend Adolphe Adams composed the music for the poem. The song was performed for the congregation on Christmas Eve, who loved the carol. Unfortunately however, the story takes a sad turn, for Cappeau became a socialist and left the church. When it was discovered the song's composer wasn't a Christian, the French church leadership banned the song. Legend has it that the French

people continued to sing it however, outside official approval.

In 1857 American abolitionist John Dwight heard the carol and loved its vibrant message of hope. He translated it into English and it became popular in the North during the Civil War.

It is said that during the Franco-Prussian War, in a lull of the fighting, a French soldier began singing the carol. The Germans were so moved they responded by singing a hymn. The singing encouraged the soldiers to honor a truce for 24 hours on Christmas. Because of this, the French Catholic Church received the song back into its worship services.

The song "O Holy Night" was the first song ever broadcast over the radio. Played by Reginald Fessenden (a former colleague of Thomas Edison) on the violin, it was broadcast after he read the story of the birth of Jesus from Luke on Christmas Eve 1906.

This song written by a wine merchant, set to music composed by a Jewish composer, banned by the powers that be of the Catholic Church, kept alive by the French, sung by troops in the trenches and the first song ever played over the radio is one that is still enjoyed by millions of people all over the world today.

The beautiful lyrics are full of love, peace, joy and hope.

It speaks of the majesty and beauty not just of the night of Christmas, but also of our Saviour.

Judge's Comments

I found your article interesting, informative and thought provoking. It made me appreciate the spirit behind the song and the long-term effects of a single piece of passionate and anointed writing and of course a talented musical composition by a Jew on a song about Jesus. How ironic!

I've pasted the following excerpt from your piece to critique:

'Unfortunately however, the story takes a sad turn, for Cappeau became a socialist and left the church. When it was discovered the song's composer wasn't a Christian, the French church leadership banned the song. Legend has it that the French people continued to sing it however, outside official approval.'

There is no need for both 'unfortunately' and 'however' at the start as they serve the same function in the sentence. Just pick one. Also, the second 'however' in the last sentence of this paragraph would serve better at the start of the sentence.

'It is said that during the Franco-Prussian War, in a lull of the fighting...'

The latter phrase would read better as follows: '...during a lull in the fighting'.

Finally, the paragraph starting with 'This song' is missing a comma after 'song'.

I want to thank you for your faithfulness in sending quality entries consistently despite being the only one at times. I hope the experience is rewarding for you and you'll encourage others to do it too!

Well done Bonnie!

Level One

Judge:

Debbie McDermott

Requirement: 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.

General Comments

A devotional is essentially a brief and well-thought out piece of inspirational writing that focuses on a particular spiritual lesson. It should include a personal story or experience (yours or someone else's), a reflection on that experience, one or two scriptures that speak to the lesson on which you are focusing, and a takeaway message for the reader.

Of the three entrants to this competition, Lynda and Pamela covered all four of these aspects very well, while Dennis concentrated mainly on the personal experience. I particularly appreciated Pamela's strong takeaway message.

Each entry has been written to a high standard and is worthy of the placing it received. Well done!

First Place



**Lynda
Otter**

of Tamatea, Napier

Unspeakable Joy

'But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people' (Luke 2:10).

What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think of Christmas? This question will elicit a variety of answers depending on who is asked.

If I were to ask a child that question, the answer will most likely be something to do with ‘getting presents’. Some might mention Christmas decorations or Christmas trees but presents are definitely an all-time Christmas favourite with children.

If I was to ask this question of an adult who did not believe in Christ possibly the answer will have something to do with family or friends, food or drink. Others might say that they don’t believe in Christmas or don’t celebrate Christmas. Many people find Christmas a difficult time of year because of relationship breakdown, loneliness, family violence or the expense of trying to meet everyone’s expectations. Christmas Day may actually be an anti-climax after all the build-up and the hard work in the months prior.

However, ask a Christian and it would most certainly have something to do with the birth of the Christ Child. The miracle of the birth of the baby who would become our Saviour. A demonstration of God’s wonderful love, His plan for redemption and the hope that the birth of this wee boy brings to the world.

When I think of Christmas I think of joy! Imagine Mary’s joy at being chosen to carry God’s own son. Think of the joy of the Shepherds when the angels appeared and told them that the Messiah had been born. Then their joy at seeing the baby

and having the privilege of worshipping beside the manger. How joyful the Magi were when they saw the star that heralded the birth of the long-expected King of the Jews.

Many greet Christmas morning with expectation and excitement. Often the reality is that Christmas Day does not deliver on the expectation, the excitement or the anticipation because these are based on the wrong reality. But the joy of the birth of the Saviour always delivers. Christmas is about love and hope, it is also about joy.

This joy is available to everyone who believes and accepts Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.

The good news revealed
The birth of a boy
Anticipated Saviour
Unspeakable joy.

Judge’s Comments

Lynda has met the requirements of this competition very well. The impact and flow of her devotion is excellent—as is the correlation between her opening scripture, her testimony on what Christmas means to her, and her lovely concluding poem. She has also drawn a clear contrast between the secular viewpoint and the Christian viewpoint, as well as clearly defined to the reader what Christmas is truly about without being preachy.

Lynda’s grammar and punctuation are excellent. The only changes needed are:

- *Opening Scripture—put double speech marks before the closing quote mark. Then put a full stop after ‘people’ and delete the full stop after the closing bracket.*

- *Para 3—‘If I was...’ should read ‘If I were...’ However, as you have already used ‘If I were’ in para 2, I suggest simply changing the opening line of para 3 to read ‘If I asked...’*
- *Para 3—sentence 1: Put a comma after ‘Christ’, as there is a natural pause before the word ‘possibly’.*
- *Para 5—sentence 3: ‘shepherds’ should begin with a small ‘s’.*

*Congratulations on such excellent writing
Lynda. Do keep up the good work.*

Second Place



**Pamela
Lowrey**
of Havelock North

The Best Gift

For God so loved the world that He gave
His only beloved Son, Jesus
John 3:16

The gift God sent the world was not wrapped in a beautiful box trimmed with spectacular ribbon bows, all tinselled and colour co-ordinated. Nor did the birth of Jesus rate as the top News Item on Television announcing a royal Prince. Nor were the paparazzi present jostling for the best positions to get that first exclusive shot of the royal baby for all the world to see.

The plain simple fact was that Jesus was not born in a sterile hospital suite being monitored, with an abundance of skilled Professional staff in attendance ready to cope with any emergency should it possibly happen. No ! Jesus was born in

an animal stable to an unwed teenage mother named Mary accompanied by Joseph the man who was betrothed to marry her. Jesus was hidden from the crowds, and His birth was announced by angels to a few humble shepherds protecting their little flocks of sheep in the fields during the night. Jesus wasn't dressed in exquisite baby clothes. He was wrapped in swaddling material which was normally used to bind animals wounds. Jesus didn't have a cradle that Mary could gently rock, nor was His bed lined with the softest of fabrics to keep Him warm. He lay sleeping in the hay in the stall where the animals fed and slept.

What an incongruous start in life for the baby Jesus who would grow up to become Saviour of the world, destined to have a short Ministry to the common people who heard Him gladly as He healed the sick, cast out demons, raised the dead, released the prisoners and set the captives free. Then He would be crucified a cruel death on the cross by the religious leaders of the day because He didn't fit in with their rules and regulations especially when He declared He was God's Son and would rise again in 3 days! God promised us that if we believe in Him we will not perish in the grave but will have everlasting life and live with Him for Eternity.

Make some time early on

Christmas Day morn,
Enter the stable where Jesus was born.
Come worship the King
and do all your part ...
Give Him your best gift –
the whole of your heart.

Judge's Comments

Pamela has met the key requirements of this competition very well. Her opening scripture and paragraph are both excellent as they immediately inform the reader Christmas is a gift God has sent, rather than the glitz it has become in our secular world.

While some of the long sentences in paragraph two make it less punchy than the opening statement, it still elaborates on paragraph one very well.

Pamela's final paragraph is particularly impacting as it states why Jesus came, and invites the reader to believe in Him. This is reinforced by her four-line poem which clearly expresses what our response to God's wonderful gift of Jesus should be.

On a slightly negative note, I do need to point out that Pamela's comment on Mary being an unwed teenage mother is incorrect. Matthew 1:24 clearly states Joseph married Mary before Jesus was born. It is very important when writing about an historical event to make sure we have got the facts right before putting pen to paper.

Apart from some sentences which are far too long, Pamela's punctuation and grammar are generally very good. Areas for correction are:

- *Paras 1 & 3—'news item', 'television', 'professional' and 'ministry' should begin with small letters, not capitals.*
- *Para 2—sentence 5: 'animals' should be written 'animal' as the context of the sentence infers it is plural. Alternatively, put an apostrophe after the 's' (i.e. animals') to indicate it is plural.*

- *Para 3—sentence 2: insert a comma after 'regulations' as there is a natural pause here when reading this sentence aloud. The number 3 should also be written as three. Only numbers above 10 are written as numerals instead of words. e.g. 11, 12, 13, etc.*

Well done, Pamela, for submitting such a commendable entry. Keep it up.

Third Place



**Dennis
McLeod**
of Hamilton

Remembering that Day

As I sit at the tomb I think of the last few days when I watched the nails being driven into His hands, I remembered back all those years before when we were watching our sheep. The angel appeared and said "This day a saviour has been born". We hurried to see this babe, born in such humble surroundings.

We were in the area a while later when some men came with such gifts! Gifts fit for a King. As the years passed I followed the life of this child as he grew and visited Jerusalem and the work he did each time he came to that great city. I saw him heal the blind and the lame; he also raised people from the dead. Surely this was the Saviour as the Angel had said on that cold dark night in Bethlehem. He taught in the Temple grounds and people just knew he was someone special and when he read from

Isaiah 61 and then indicated he was this person, that really upset a few people.

I heard some people talking of how this Jesus had even forgiven people of their sins. This was the man who stood at the Temple steps and said, "I am the living water and all those who come to me will never thirst." He travelled a long and hard road from Bethlehem to Golgotha. But there they nailed him to a cross and the end of his work seemed finished and as I stood there I heard the Roman soldier say, truly this man was the Son of God. All joy had gone and the sky was dark, however I remembered the words of the Angel, born is the Messiah and I just knew he would rise and rise he did.

As I sit looking at the empty tomb I can't help thinking back to that manger and the little baby in his mother's arms. I remember the gifts the men brought and the humble surrounds of His birth. From this day forth people will remember that day in Bethlehem and what that baby became and what he did for all mankind.

With the sheep in the winter sun
There was never any time for fun.
Then the day of Christmas arrived
The time of Jesus and how he is alive.

Judge's Comments

While Dennis' piece is well written and enjoyable to read, it falls more into the genre of a short story than a devotional. Apart from this, he has met the other requirements of the competition very well, which was to start with a scripture and end with a four-line poem. Well done.

There is a good flow to the overall piece, but its impact would have been stronger had Dennis' style of writing been more

passionate. His reflection on the ministry of Jesus also comes across as though he's speaking only to himself and not to the reader. This dampens the impact of the piece even further, which is a pity.

Apart from a couple of sentences being too long, Dennis' standard of writing is good. The only changes needed are:

- *Para 1—sentence 2: Put a comma after 'said', then move the full stop to before the closing speech marks.*
- *Para 2—sentence 3: As this sentence has two 'ands' put a comma after Jerusalem to break it up a little.*
- *Paras 2 & 3: 'angel' should start with a small 'a'.*
- *Para 3—sentence 4: Replace 'and' after 'finished' with a full stop. Then write 'As I stood there...' as a new sentence. "Truly this man..." should also be in speech marks.*
- *Para 3—sentence 5: Replace the comma after 'dark' with a full stop. Then write 'However...' as a new sentence.*
- *Para 4—sentence 3: Put a comma or long em dash before the second 'and'.*

All in all, you presented me with a worthy piece of writing. Dennis. Well done.

Level Two

Judge:

Jan Pendergrast

Requirement: Explain a well-known event on the Christian calendar to a new Christian, in simple terms. 350-400 words.

General Comments

This competition lends itself to a personal approach—one to one—so a

conversational manner is best. Two entrants (women) used this approach; the others' (men) wrote more of an article to a general audience. I liked Shirley's approach the best, but the number of corrections lost her first place.

All entries were well presented with next to no punctuation mistakes. Some grammatical errors needed attention.

I noticed confusion with 'who', 'that' and 'which'. Always use 'who' for people and 'which' or 'that' for things. More recently 'that' has been accepted for people, but I prefer the less harsh 'who'.

- The person **who** answered the phone was very helpful.
- My car, **which** is 20 years old, isn't worth much.
- This is the style **that** I want to use

Be frugal with your use of adverbs. They slow down your writing. An effective sentence can be written without them, producing the same effect.

First Place



**John
Lindsay**
of Christchurch

Death is Not the End of the Story

Easter is a two-part story. It begins with betrayal, false accusations, injustice, brutality and death, and ends in triumph and joy as God raises Jesus Christ to life.

The resurrection is more important than many Christians realise. It confirms God

is in control, defeating Satan and death. (Acts 2:24) The resurrection also fulfils the prophetic words of King David. (Psalm 16:10)

Before Jesus returned to heaven, he told the apostles to be his witnesses and when they started preaching in Jerusalem, they kept telling the Jews that God raised Jesus back to life. (Acts 3:15) Later, when Peter was sent to visit Cornelius, who was not a Jew, he again emphasised the resurrection. (Acts 10:40)

The Apostle Paul was not a follower of Jesus with the other disciples, but the resurrected Christ stopped him on the road to Damascus. Like the other apostles, Paul declared the importance of the resurrection. In the Greek city of Athens he said the resurrection was the proof that God commands everyone to repent, turn away from idols and false gods and turn to the God who has raised Jesus from the dead and appointed him to be judge of all. (Acts 17:29-32). But the Greeks scoffed at the idea of the resurrection of the dead.

Paul also explained the importance of the resurrection in his first letter to the church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 15). He said that if Christ was not raised from the dead, Christians are liars, preaching is useless, our faith is futile, we are still carrying the burden of our sins and we have no hope in this life or beyond. Without the resurrection, we have no message of good news.

The last book in the Bible, written by the apostle John, begins with the words "The revelation of Jesus Christ" and ends with a wonderful picture of eternal

peace and life in heaven with God. As we read Revelation, we discover it is based on the fact that Jesus is alive. In the first chapter, Jesus in all his glory comes to John with the words, "I am the living one; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever!" (Revelation 1:18)

Yes, Jesus is alive! This certainty gives us a sure foundation for our faith today and our hope for the future.

Judge's Comments

John wrote an interesting, thought-provoking article.

My thoughts: Remember, your conversation will be tempered by whether you are talking to a new Christian who hasn't had a Christian upbringing, and may have no idea who's who in the Bible, or one who may have an academic Biblical knowledge. I could not fault the spelling, punctuation or grammar in John's article, but I felt it was too academic and impersonal for a 'close' conversation. A great article, nevertheless.

Second Place



**Shirley
Jamieson**
of Featherston

The Greatest Gift of Love

Hi Fiona, First, thank you for sharing the wonderful news that you gave your life to God last week. I'm delighted!

As you said in your email, you've taken the first step on the journey in knowing your Heavenly Father.

Re your questions about Easter, I'll do my best to answer you.

Even though it's about 2000 years since Jesus died on the cross and rose to life again, the time factor isn't a problem.

God is eternal. He sees, and is involved in what happened in the past, what happens now and in the future. The Bible tells us God planned our salvation even before he created the earth. Jesus, God's innocent Son, took the death penalty for our sins many years ago but the effect of it is continuous.

Sin separates us from God because he is perfect. Jesus actually carried our sin in his body on the cross. Unimaginable horror, but he did it willingly. This meant Jesus gives us free access to God. It is a loving gift for everyone who asks for forgiveness in faith.

This comes to the question you asked about how people were forgiven before Jesus came.

In the Old Testament of the Bible, it tells the story of the Israelites (the ancient Jewish people) who were then slaves in Egypt. God told Moses, an Israelite, to demand Pharaoh to free them. God had already allocated a country for them to go to.

Pharaoh refused Moses time after time. God sent plagues to Egypt but still Pharaoh wouldn't budge. Finally Moses told him all the first born sons would die. Incredibly Pharaoh refused again.

God told the Israelites how to stay safe. They needed to kill lambs and

mark their doorposts with the lamb's blood. Sounds gruesome, but they did it. They held the special Feast of Passover that evening and no Israelites died. The eldest sons of the Egyptians all died though.

Pharaoh finally let the Israelites go free. Each year they celebrated Passover in grateful memory to God for their freedom. When people sinned, they'd take a lamb to their priests to sacrifice to God in faith. Their sin would be placed on the innocent lamb and it died in their place.

Jesus died during a Passover. He is called the Lamb of God.

So at Easter, we Christians remember that the greatest gift of love came from God.

Judge's Comments

Shirley used a reply to an email to explain her event. It was a relaxed flowing and 'chatty' style, beginning with a welcoming greeting.

My suggestions:

Para 6, to give more emphasis, say 'Jesus took our sin...' and leave out 'actually'; it's unnecessary.

Para 8, begin with, 'The Exodus story, in the Old testament of the Bible, tells of the Israelites...' and leave out 'then' in that sentence. The last sentence is clumsy with 'for them to go to'. Change it to, 'God had a country planned for them'.

Para 9. To remove one of the two adverbs on the second line, change to 'Moses warned him...'

Para 10. Change the second sentence to,

'Each family needed to kill a lamb...'. The Passover requires more explanation for a new Christian. To keep within the word count she may have to sacrifice something else in her 'email'.

For emphasis in the second to last sentence write, 'Jesus, our innocent lamb, died...', and begin the last sentence with 'At'.

Shirley's 'email' was well thought through and presented. Well done.

Third Place



**Keith
Willis**
of Kaukapakapa

Pentecost

As Christians we celebrate three historic events annually. Christmas is observed by most people in New Zealand and is recognised as the birthday of Jesus. Easter is also enjoyed as a holiday by most people, but many don't acknowledge it as the anniversary of Jesus' death and resurrection. The third event is Pentecost. Surprisingly this is celebrated by very few people, even Christians, despite it being, in some ways, the most important of the three! It is in fact the Birthday of the Christian Church.

The festival of Pentecost has been celebrated by the Jews since the time of Moses. It was prescribed by God to mark the early wheat harvest. The people were to bring bread made from the fresh grain as a 'first fruit' offering to God. It was to be held seven weeks after the Passover

and is therefore sometimes referred to as the festival of weeks.

The significance of this to the Christian is that God choose this festive time of Pentecost to send his Holy Spirit to the waiting disciples. Jesus had earlier told them to wait in Jerusalem, so they were still there, seven weeks after His resurrection (which had occurred on the Sunday of Passover). They assembled with the local Jews and a large number of pilgrims who had travelled to Jerusalem from many countries for the annual Pentecost festival. The Bible, in the second chapter of Acts, describes how the Holy Spirit came dramatically on the assembled people, filling them and allowing them to speak in many languages.

This event is regarded as the birthday of the Christian Church. The handful of disciples that had followed Jesus had spent seven weeks waiting, rather like runners milling around waiting for the race to start. Now, with the power of the Holy Spirit within them, they were equipped to start building the Church. Three thousand people believed and joined the new Church that day and the Good News of salvation through Jesus Christ spread rapidly and not only in Jerusalem. The many pilgrims that had come to celebrate Pentecost took the news back to their home countries. God had chosen the perfect occasion to send his Holy Spirit.

Thanks to the events that occurred at that festival, we can enjoy the guidance, comfort and power from being filled with the Holy Spirit. This surely is reason enough to celebrate on Pentecost Sunday.

Judge's Comments

Keith also wrote an interesting, informative article.

My suggestions:

Para 1, first line, needs a comma after Christians, 'Birthday' doesn't need a capital letter.

Para 3, no comma is required in the third para at 'still there seven weeks...'; 'a large number' is vague. Say 'thousands'.

Para 4, 'disciples' and pilgrims' needs 'who', not 'that'.

Para 5 use 'of' not 'from' and skip 'on' in the last sentence.

I particularly liked Keith's comparison of the disciples waiting to 'runners milling around waiting for the race to start'—a clear visual picture.

Level Three

Judge:

Ruth Linton

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.

General Comments

Besides the normal use of good language there are 'technical aspects' to include when writing a good book review and the recommended article as well as a quick check on the internet brought up several important pointers to be included: title and author, publisher and date published, the edition you read, number of pages, special features such as photos, layout and

binding, ISBN number and price. Most commonly these 'technical pointers' are given at the beginning of the review but some can be added at the end depending on the in-house style of the publishers of the review. Not all of these details are given with every review and one of the most important is the ISBN number. Only two of the entries received included the majority of these details (and no one included the ISBN number). Well done Lois and Pat.

From the first sentence the review should be written to capture the reader's attention and the final paragraph should tie all the points together without giving away the author's full story (especially with fiction works).

With non-fiction works consider the audience level and how the writer deals with the topic compared to other authors on the same topic. The introduction and preface are valuable sources of information. Consider also whether the facts are accurate, whether footnotes are used well, and if a bibliography and/or a subject index are required and are included.

For fiction works good reviews comment on such things as the development of the plot, how characters are portrayed (are they authentic?) and is the setting (where the story takes place) life like.

In all reviews quotations can be used to illustrate your point or opinion. And don't forget, you do not have to like everything about the book. If it is a hard read say so and why.

First Equal



**Lois
Farrow**
of Christchurch

In Her Own Voice

Hayley Westenra with Darren Henley
Virgin Books Ltd. Great Britain 2007
213 pp RRP \$37.99

Hayley Westenra realised it was unusual to be writing her autobiography at age twenty. But as she explains, her dreams were unfolding so fast, she wanted to tell of her first two decades before it all became a blur. *In Her Own Voice* is the result.

With expert help from UK author, Darren Henley, she tells the story of her transition from hometown Christchurch to international singer and performer.

From a young age Hayley realised that her voice had power to draw people. Performing in school concerts and busking on Christchurch streets brought her to public attention. She discovered she loved the applause and adulation she received, and she was soon noticed by influential people in the music world.

Hayley comes from a close family who have always been her greatest support. Her first album, *Walking in the Air*, was produced by her family in 2000 as a demo for Universal Music New Zealand. This led to her first commercial album, *Hayley Westenra*, in 2001 when she was only fourteen.

After two albums by Universal Music, Hayley was signed for a five-album deal

by Decca in the UK, and first stayed in London when she was fifteen. The first album with Decca, *Pure*, in 2003, became the best-selling debut album in the history of the UK classical charts. Hayley became a household name internationally.

Throughout the book we see her growing maturity. She learned that as the artist she could have some editorial control. She developed as a song writer, had exciting opportunities for solo tours, and relished touring with established artists and groups.

“Stay true to yourself,” Hayley writes as part of her advice to others. Her down-to-earth personality kept her grounded as she met and performed for many famous people.

Hayley enjoyed establishing her UNICEF charity, Bikes for Ghana, and visits Ghana when she can to ride with the girls benefitting from the bikes.

I enjoyed reading about our local girl, Hayley, becoming an international star. Two sections of colour photographs illustrate important milestones in her life, and the light tone makes this an easy and satisfying read.

Judge’s Comments

Well done Lois. You have included many of the ‘technical details’ and have provided an accurately written review about a popular New Zealander. Your quote in paragraph seven shows the depth of Hayley’s character.

I did wonder if you disclosed too much of Hayley’s life though most is likely

well-known in NZ. A comment about her working with a writer, Darren Henley, and any effect it may have had on the book, could have been useful.

Your concluding paragraph shows your enthusiasm for the book and gives good reasons for your opinion. Certainly I would want to read it after seeing your review.

First Equal



**Pat
Kerr**
of Roxburgh

Dear Leader
Jang Jin-Sung: translated by
Shirley Lee
Rider Press 2014
316 pages
NZ \$34.99

North Korea is an enigma. The leader is revered as a god. The current leader is young and ruthless. Our news reports tell us that much. He, Kim Jong-il, is in control of sophisticated nuclear weapons and since usurping power from his father Kim Il-sung, has ‘eradicated’ his pregnant wife, uncle and top officials. How can this be?

Jang Jin-Sung (a pseudonym) writes his autobiography from the safety of South Korea. Thus we know he survives horrific circumstances revealed in his book. How can these circumstances exist in today’s sophisticated world? One could be sceptical if there were no similar autobiographies being published

that give similar reports from women, other ethnic folk and unprivileged people.

The author was chief propagandist. He was one of the Admitted. His role as poetic propagandist at age 27 once took him into the presence of the Dear Leader for 20 minutes private time. Few people had this experience and the privileges that followed. His living and working conditions were rich and rare at the Central Party Headquarters in Pyongyang city.

Thus his return visit to his village shocked him. People were skeletal. His gift of alcohol for his starving friend seemed obscene. A mother was selling her child for a few cents to buy food: no one was buying.

Even the Admitted lived by rigid rules. Break one rule and all privileges cease. The book reads like a modern spy novel. How did he survive? It is a cracking read. This is fact not fiction. Influxes of refugees turn aid agencies into brick walls for the desperate. Miracles do happen. Good generous people exist.

In 2013 he writes: ‘There are two North Koreas: one real and the other fiction created by the regime. It was after my defection that I recognised the existence of a third Korea: a theoretical one. This is the North Korea constructed by the outside world...’ (p 310)

‘If North Korea has lies and nukes, I have the truth, the written word,’ (p xi) the author writes.

Knowledge empowers. What can the reader do with this knowledge?

Judge’s Comments

Pat’s first paragraph is composed of short punchy sentences that immediately capture the reader’s attention. As her review continues we are left in no doubt that North Korea is not a pleasant place to live. The corrupt behaviour of men in power is clearly portrayed. Clearly this book would provoke the reader to consider deeply the implications of living under such a regime and Pat shows how the book impacted her by the quote in the second to last paragraph and by her final rhetorical question.

*However, the page numbers included in the text would have been better inserted as footnotes. The final sentence in paragraph one would be better as ‘How **could** this **happen**?’ so it is in the past tense matching ‘has eradicated’ in the sentence before.*

Pat also provided many of the publication’s details and her writing style is crisp and interesting. Well done.

Third Place



**Judith
Powell**
of Oxford

The Dressmaker’s Daughter

Nancy Carson’s book, *The Dressmaker’s Daughter*, an historical novel set in ‘the middle of England’ in the Black Country, is an omniscient view of the life of fictional character Lizzie Bishop. The story, based on real

events, begins in 1906 with a flashback to the death of Lizzie's father in 1902. One of a trilogy, this book ambles through nearly forty years of Lizzie's life.

The time and place are a major part of the story. Carson describes the book as portraying "the problems, the heartache, and the temptations endured by the folk who were left at home" during the war. She is a keen student of local history who knows the setting well as she was born and raised in the same Kates Hill area of the town of Dudley as Lizzie.

The character, Stanley, paints a vivid picture when he tries to convince Lizzie to move with him away "from all this drabness, from this filthy hole where you can't even get enough coal to light a bloody fire." He continues by describing the dirt, fog, rain, smoke, rundown terrace houses, pit banks and black smoking chimney stacks.

The book includes many references to the social and political backgrounds of the story. Carson used her characters to show opposing thoughts about current events. One example is Ben and Lizzie's discussion about Women's Suffrage. Ben believes Mrs Pankhurst is wrong to behave as she does while Lizzie describes her as a brave woman. Later Ben is incensed when suffragettes set fire to churches.

Small details are woven into the story. Lizzie hangs her coat on a nail on the back of the scullery door. When Lizzie gets a new job we learn that threepence an hour is good pay and that she will no longer have to work Saturday mornings.

I was neither emotionally involved with Lizzie nor was I drawn into her life

enough to empathise with her decisions; however I found the detail of the book interesting. I often read historical novels and enjoyed the descriptions of the place and time in this book

Bibliography

Carson, Nancy *The Dressmaker's Daughter* Harper Collins Publishers 2015 (As *Eve's Daughter* Hodder and Stoughton 2002)

www.nancy-carson.com/wordpress

Judge's Comments

This is a well-written review from one of the newer Level Three writers. Judith explores the setting and the characters in the book in a convincing way. She mentions some of the little details that make the story authentic.

In her excellent final paragraph we see why Judith was not drawn in to the actual story line—a well-thought-out comment on the book and one that she hints at by using the word 'ambles' in the first paragraph.

The information in the bibliography would have been better at the start of the review and details such as RRP, number of pages and ISBN number should have been included.

In paragraphs two and three quotes are included, which is a good idea. However, they should have been enclosed in single quote marks not double speech marks or even set out in italics. The pages where they occur should be included as footnotes.

After reading this review I would be interested in reading this book and I'm sure others who enjoy historical novels would too. Well done.

Competitions for February 2017

Due by January 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

Level One—for members 20 years old and over

Requirement: Write a short story involving conflict between two or more people, showing how the situation is diffused by putting into practice the principles taught in the Bible; e.g. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. 400-450 words.

Email entry to: Debbie McDermott at: sddp@xtra.co.nz



Debbie

Level Two—for members 20 years old and over

Requirement: Write a simple song or chorus for use in Sunday School. You may use an existing tune or write your own music. 4 verses maximum.

Email entry to: Janet Fleming at mjflamingos@xtra.co.nz



Janet

Level Three—for members 20 years old and over

Requirement: Write a submission to a Government Select Committee on a current issue, following the rules of making a submission. (See <https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/sc/how-to-make-a-submission>). A Christian viewpoint is optional. 250 words maximum, including details such as the name of the subject, the name of the Select Committee, etc.

Email entry to: Julia Martin at: pemburyestate@slingshot.co.nz



Julia

Under 20s—for members 7-19 years old

Requirement: There are some unique symbiotic relationships in creation like the crocodile and the plover bird. Write a conversation that occurs between these creatures. 200-300 words

Email entry to: Vicki Nogaj at: nogaj@vodafone.co.nz



Vicki



NZ CHRISTIAN
writers



DR KATHRYN OWLER has a lifelong interest in people's vocational experience, specialising in fun at work. Since completing her PhD in sociology at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, she has researched and published work on the subject of wellbeing at work.

She is currently a director of Joyworkz, a workplace wellness company, and is also a learning advisor at AUT University in Auckland.

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