

FEB - MAY 22

# YOUNG

## CHRISTIAN WRITER

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Karen McMillan

*The Swimming Pool*

Poem by Rodney Hickman

Short Story Writing  
Competition for writers  
up to 25 years of age

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# Young Christian Writer

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### **Website:**

Check out our website for how to join us and to view copies of past magazines. Members with published items have a free profile page on our site to promote their work. Please encourage other young Christian writers you know to join us via our website:

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

## President's Note



Welcome to a brand new edition of *Young Christian Writer*, an insightful magazine for younger writers published by NZ Christian Writers.

We trust you are having a fantastic start to your 2022. For those of you who may be new to NZ Christian Writers, we are a nationwide collective of around 300+ authors, bloggers, editors, lyricists, poets, publishers, songwriters, storytellers and writers throughout New Zealand. We attract passionate writers covering various disciplines of writing. We love to see young people improving their gift for writing and if they have a passion to publish their own books, to encourage them to pursue their goals.

Along with competitions we offer inspiring seminars and writers retreats to encourage and upskill people in their writing. Our vision is to create a vibrant community of Christian writers by connecting them to other like-minded writers in New Zealand. We welcome both beginner and experienced writers. You are welcome to find out more about us and encourage others to join us here: [www.nzchristianwriters.org/join/](http://www.nzchristianwriters.org/join/)

Be blessed as you read this edition of *Young Christian Writer*.

Justin St. Vincent, President, NZ Christian Writers

**you matter.**



## "Hi!" From the Editor

One of the things the Lord was teaching me in 2021 was not to run away from problems but to work through them. To work through them I needed support which included good listening from wise friends. I needed to do research and locate helpful resources. I needed to pray a lot and ask the Lord to help me.

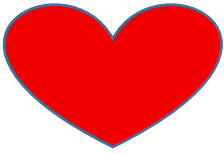
It can seem easier to give up or evacuate the location of the challenge, but I discovered avoiding or escaping isn't as fulfilling as the personal character growth, emotional healing and learning process that happens when we choose to stay and work it through.

While working through the challenges, reading the Bible was a source of strength and spiritual food. Listening to positive Christian music, reading Christian books and watching Christian movies helped keep my mind positive. Listening to good content on YouTube and spending time with Christian friends was very important too.

If you're going through a personal challenge, I encourage you to see it as an opportunity to learn something new about yourself. Every life experience you go through becomes good material for your writing. If you are avoiding a challenge, you are missing out on discovering what's on the other side of that challenge. It's as if you've experienced the beginning of a story but haven't read it through to the end. If you want to write the story of your challenge, you need to experience working through the challenge and coming out the other side.

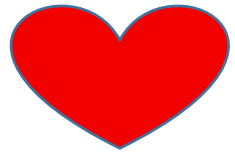
I encourage you to work your challenges through to the other side, whether they are writing challenges or any other kind of personal difficulties. Remember to ask God to help you do it. He often surprises us if we're willing to pay attention to His wisdom.

With love in Jesus Christ, from Kathryn



# Love is Simple

by Taylor Foster



His worn, smudged hand tousled his scruffy, stubby beard. The faint white and grey flecks that tickled his skin were dry and blunt. His eyes, deep yet shallow, held stories. Stories of pain and stories of joy, of loss and of redemption. Their brown and green depths were windows to the inside. Though the windows were open not many looked within. On top of his head was a matted mass of mud-and-silver hair. Its knots were tight, coiled and looped, making his hair appear shorter than it was.

This man was perched out the front of an abandoned shop front. A large 'For Lease' sign striped across the glass above his tired head. His body looked limp, like a puppet on strings left on the ground, no longer held taut by the loving puppeteer. A ragged shirt clung to his shoulders. It was large and draped down around him, looking like a blanket. Once the shirt had been clean, fresh and new, now it was nothing but a rag, a symbol of what he'd lost.

This man was not alone. Around him lay his prized possessions, items that were dear to his weak heart. On his left, placed down on the pavement, was a worn and rustic pair of sandals, an old book with fraying pages and broken spine and a small picture frame. To his right lay a small cardboard box and an ink pen. The box read on its front 'please help'. Inside lay a small shiny coin, precious and valuable.

He stared out, head slightly tilted left, to the road that lay in front of him. Cars whizzed past, people moving so fast they couldn't look up. Walking in front and past him were women, children and men. Their strides carried them past him, leaving him far behind. Children's innocent faces turned and stared; mothers moved to the opposite side of the path.

Individuals stared down at bright screens, never looking up. He was not noticed; he was not seen. More and more people stumbled past, lost in their pace and their own lives. Work was calling, time was never on their side.

One child walked past, he carried in his hand a small baby-blue blanket. He clung onto his safety in one hand and his parent with the other. Once again, they were on the opposite side of the path, the father beckoning his child to keep moving. This young boy with his spiderman shirt and his tracksuit pants looked at the poor lonely figure on the footpath, bunched in his loneliness. In one swift movement the child broke from his father and crept toward the man.

He stood looking at him for a brief moment. The ragged man turned his eyes toward the boy and smiled. Anyone would have seen him as mad, another crazy one. But this young boy saw a man, a vulnerable man, a man needing love. As his father ran over to grab him the boy spoke in his sweet child innocence.

"Hi. I'm Toby, what's your name?" The man's head now turned toward the boy and his shallow eyes became soft and gentle.



The man gently whispered, "Marcus."

"Hello, Marcus. Can I be your friend?"

With these simple words the man broke. He wept on the ground; soft droplets fell from his tired eyes. They carried the weight of the world, and splashed and broke onto the pavement, breaking down some long held hurt.

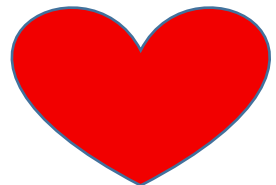
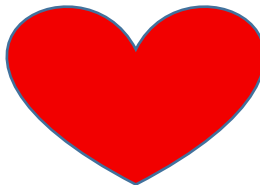
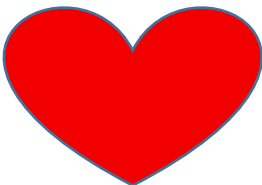
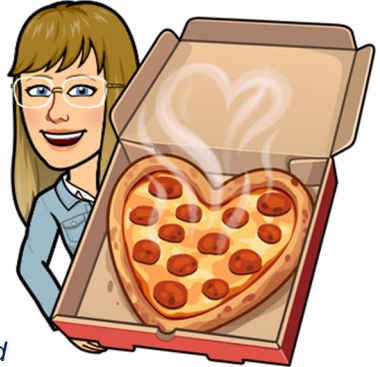
"Yes... Yes, of course you can," the man said between tears and breaths.

Suddenly the boy's father was there and he snatched the young spirit away. The father stole one look at the man, and his eyes held pity but also shame and fear. Tugging at the boy's hand he led the child away. As he was pulled the boy turned and waved his blanket in goodbye. The man hunched on the road sat and stared after the boy for many hours thinking about how the boy had shown he cared.

For days and weeks afterwards the boy and his father would walk their commute to daycare. Each time the boy passed he ran up to his friend to tell him some piece of news or give him a gift of a story book. The visits grew longer as his father let him stay. Then one day, the young boy gave the man his much-loved blanket. The man draped the blanket over his lap and felt its warmth and the love of a boy who saw more than what his eyes saw.

## Love is Simple – Meaning

*This piece was unplanned and only after reading it I discovered the simple yet profound truth in it. Toby, the young boy, was not afraid to enter the presence of a stranger and reach out to him. He offered him all that he had at that moment - his time and friendship. Sometimes, we would rather avoid others for fear of being entangled in their mess, but sometimes a hand reaching out is all that they need. Jesus himself was always reaching out his hand, sitting, talking, and listening. Perhaps we should try one day to be a little more childlike, enough to make us slow down and see every single person and offer them what we all have - a bit of time, a smile, and a kind word. **Taylor Foster***



# Interview with author, Karen McMillan



**KAREN MCMILLAN** is the author of 14 books, published in 9 countries, a mixture of fiction, non-fiction and children's books. Her non-fiction titles include *—Everyday Strength*, *Unbreakable Spirit*, *Love Bytes*, and *Feast or Famine*. Karen has ghost-written *From the Blitz to the Burmese Jungle and Beyond: A Memoir* by Brian Hennessy. Her fiction titles include *Watching Over Me*, and the bestselling historical novels *The Paris of the East* and *The Paris of the West*. *Brushstrokes of Memory* is her latest novel. Karen has a Diploma in Professional Writing and an Advanced Diploma of Applied Arts (Writing). *Love Bytes* was originally published as *Love in Aotearoa* by Random House and the book was short-listed for the Ashton Wylie Book Award. She is also the author of the popular *Elastic Island Adventure* series for children, that is in early development to be made into a TV series. Karen is a breast cancer survivor.

## Karen how old were you when you discovered you liked writing?

*I've always loved reading and writing for as long as I can remember. By the age of ten, my short stories were being published in a national Sunday newspaper on the kids' page, so I was very fortunate to have an early start with being published.*

## What inspired the content of your Elastic Island series?

*I was inspired by Milla, the then 10-year-old in our family, who kept asking me when I would write a children's book. I suddenly realised I only had a small window if I wanted to do this for her. Our fun, family-friendly project ended up being a multi-book deal, and the movie rights have been optioned, so you just never know what might happen when you write a book!*

## How long does it take you to write an Elastic Island book?

*Hmmm, it varies a bit, probably around six months, just depending on what else is going on in my life. But I'm a very experienced author now, so typically, writing a book will take a year – and authors can spend anywhere from two to ten years on their first book.*

## What places have you visited or been a speaker at due to your role as an author?

*I've been fortunate to travel the world as an author, although it feels strange to talk about this in a time of covid. I've been to Australia and Poland on author tours. I've been to the UK and Germany to do media. I've been to San Francisco to do research. Locally, I've been invited to many centres for festivals and to speak at events, so I've been from Northland to Stewart Island as an author.*

## Can you share with our readers what is involved with your role as a publicist?

*I work for Lighthouse PR for my day job, and I love helping other writers achieve their dreams. My role is to champion books to local media, so I place interviews, extracts, reviews and giveaway promotions on TV, radio, newspapers, magazines and selected online sites. I get to read the best books each year and then spend my time talking to media about them! It's a fabulous job.*

## Is there anything else you would like to share with our magazine readers?

*To be a great writer, you need to read a lot, so aim to read 50 to 100 books each year. And with your writing, don't worry that your first draft isn't perfect. Just get it down, and then you can rework it into something much better. It's like building a house. Make sure your overall building is in good shape before going in and decorating the rooms.*

Karen McMillan

[www.karenm.co.nz](http://www.karenm.co.nz)

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

## BOOKS BY KAREN MCMILLAN



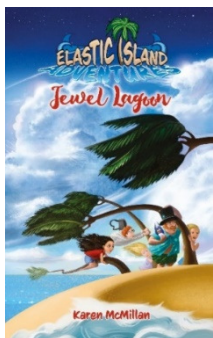
### Blong the Cat's Costume Caper

By Karen McMillan

\$19.99

To purchase please visit: [www.karenm.co.nz](http://www.karenm.co.nz)

*Blong goes shopping to buy a special outfit, but not everyone likes his choices! For children 3+.*



## Elastic Island Adventures Jewel Lagoon

By Karen McMillan

**\$19.99**

To purchase please visit: [www.karenm.co.nz](http://www.karenm.co.nz)

*Book one in a fantasy action-adventure series set in the South Pacific. Four children discover an elastic island that can send them pinging across the ocean!*



## Elastic Island Adventures Port Mugaloo

By Karen McMillan

**\$19.99**

To purchase please visit: [www.karenm.co.nz](http://www.karenm.co.nz)

*Book two in a fantasy action-adventure series set in the South Pacific. Ethan falls into a pond and becomes invisible. King Shiny can help, but he's gone missing!*



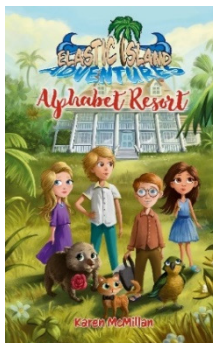
## Elastic Island Adventures Rainbow Cove

By Karen McMillan

**\$19.99**

To purchase please visit: [www.karenm.co.nz](http://www.karenm.co.nz)

*Book three in a fantasy action-adventure series set in the South Pacific. A colourful island is fading to grey and chameleons are in danger of dying. Can the children save them?*



## Elastic Island Adventures Alphabet Resort

By Karen McMillan

**\$19.99**

To purchase please visit: [www.karenm.co.nz](http://www.karenm.co.nz)

*Book four in a fantasy action-adventure series set in the South Pacific. Princess Topaz has been kidnapped, will the children find her in time for her wedding?*





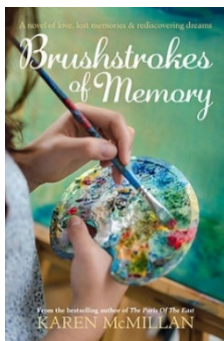
## Elastic Island Adventures Kingdom of Blong

By Karen McMillan

\$19.99

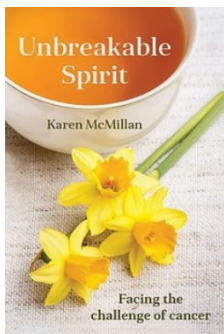
To purchase please visit: [www.karenm.co.nz](http://www.karenm.co.nz)

*Book five in a fantasy action-adventure series set in the South Pacific. Emma discovers her cat, Blong is a king. Will this ruin their relationship? (This book series can be read in any order.)*



## Brushstrokes Of Memory

*A novel of love, lost memories and rediscovering dreams. On her thirty-second birthday, Rebecca is in high spirits and life could not be better personally and professionally. But in 2013, she wakes in hospital after a head injury and finds out that nearly a decade of her life has been erased from her memory. Now almost forty-two, she can't remember anything after her thirty-second birthday! But if Rebecca can't remember anything of nearly ten years, could this be the chance for her to wipe the slate clean and start again?* Website: [www.karenm.co.nz](http://www.karenm.co.nz)



## Unbreakable Spirit Facing The Challenge Of Cancer.

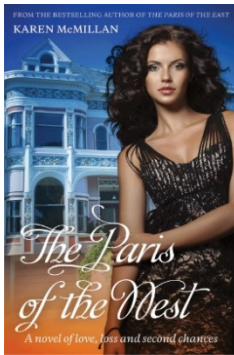
*An invaluable collection of real life stories of cancer, representing a wide range of circumstances that will provide comfort and help for families facing cancer. Unbreakable Spirit is a testimony to the resilience of the human spirit in the face of cancer. It tells the true stories of people who have survived cancer and of those who are terminally ill. It shares experiences of people who have had a loved one die from cancer. It includes information from health professionals. 'I know if you read Unbreakable Spirit, you will gain great strength from it.' – Judy Bailey.*

Website: [www.karenm.co.nz](http://www.karenm.co.nz)



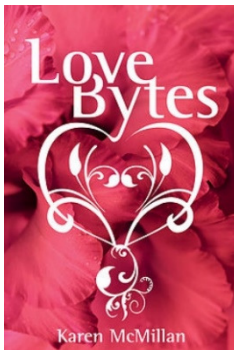
## The Paris Of The East

*A sweeping epic of love and war, courage and survival, sacrifice and loss. Warsaw, 1939. Four friends picnic on a brilliant summer's day and celebrate an engagement, aware of the rumbles of war, but hopeful that in any conflict Poland will have the upper hand. A page-turning story that spans the period of the Second World War, this is a dramatic historical adventure that goes from Warsaw to Lublin, from Bucharest to Paris, from London to the Concentration Camp at Ravensbruck – but always at the heart is the mesmerising city of Warsaw – 'The Paris of the East.'*



## The Paris Of The West

*A story of love and loss, betrayal and forgiveness, and having the courage to start over. San Francisco, 1948. Having survived the Second World War against all odds, Celina and her family arrive on a Liberty Ship into the Bay Area with high hopes for their new lives. But as new immigrants they face many hurdles, and they have to deal somehow with the trauma of war and the grief of losing loved ones. Betrayal and more heartbreak are just around the corner. A historical read set in the spectacular hilly city of San Francisco, from the jazz clubs in the Fillmore District to the sun-kissed vineyards of Sonoma.*



## Love Bytes

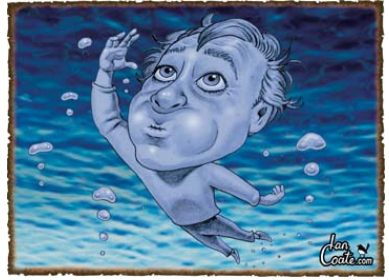
*Romance – family – friendship – humanity: love is the most important aspect of our lives. With love we become vibrant, passionate and caring people, living fully. People of all ages and all walks of life share their special moments of love. Everyday, down-to-earth examples we can all relate to are mixed with stories of love that will challenge and inspire the way we think about love. Karen uses the Greek words for the four different types of love: Eros (romance), Storge (family love), Philia (friendship) and Agape (love of humanity). Love, the most power force in the world, bursts from every page. Website: [www.karenm.co.nz](http://www.karenm.co.nz)*

## Photography by Max Carr



# The Swimming Pool

by Rodney Hickman



It was an Olympic pool I saw  
One night in a dream  
I was standing at the shallow end  
I awoke thinking, *What does this mean?*  
Then a voice called out to me  
When I went back to sleep  
*“Don’t stay in the shallow end  
Move out into the deep  
You cannot stay in this same place  
There is really so much more  
Life is like that swimming pool  
Go out boldly and explore.”*  
I did not want to drown  
Perhaps I was afraid  
But I also realised  
How huge this pool was made  
That dream I had  
Was just the other night  
I ponder about it and  
Consider it I might  
Now it is in daytime  
And fresh challenges I see  
Do not be afraid of  
New steps in front of me.

# Design Your Bible Reading Plan

by Kathryn Paul

Do you want to read the Bible right through but struggle to? Most of us start at the beginning but it's easy to lose interest when it becomes less action-filled and more a list of names or Old Testament laws.

There is an answer! I encourage you to design your own personal Bible reading plan! Separate the Bible into sections and read a certain amount each day from each section. You might only read one chapter a day of the content you struggle with but you can get good stuff out of the other sections. This way you are making progress in reaching your goal of reading the entire Bible. Use bookmarks to separate your sections. If you're reading the Bible on a device, you could use other tools in your device to create your plan and help you remember where you're up to, such as in Notes or the Calendar.

As a youth I tried to read the Bible but struggled to get into it. It seemed lifeless. I went to a church camp and was water baptised in a duck pond. After that I was surprised to find a spiritual event had taken place not just a physical one. Suddenly I discovered reading my Bible had a spark in it and I wanted to read more. I obtained a diary that had a Bible reading plan for a year which followed the Bible in chronological order, (the timeline that events took place).

Further along in my walk with Jesus, I was at a Christian healing meeting led by the late evangelist, Bill Subritzky. I could see Bill had a strong faith in God. I sent a silent prayer heavenward, *Lord God, how do I get faith like that?* To my surprise, at that second Bill stopped what he was doing mid-sentence, seized his Bible off the pulpit and shook it in the air. He said emphatically, 'To get faith you read this!' I was startled and in awe. I knew the Holy Spirit had heard my prayer and answered me through Bill's mouth. I now had another good reason to read the Bible!

I read Bill Subritzky's life-story book, *On the Cutting Edge*. In it he described his personal Bible reading plan. He would read the Gospels through in about two weeks, at the same time the rest of the New Testament in about three weeks and at the same time the Old Testament in about three months. He was reading a set amount each day from each of those sections. This inspired me and I felt determined. I thought, *if he can do it, so can I!*

So I counted chapters and wrote out my own Bible reading plan in four sections and began to read it with a fresh commitment. I read it three times a day; morning, afternoon and last thing at night. Like Bill I was reading through the Gospels every two weeks, from Acts to Revelations every three weeks and the Old Testament which I'd split into two sections, roughly every three months.



Although I'm not always able to keep up a large amount of daily Bible reading, I have now lost count of how many times I've read the Bible right through. As time went on I read different versions such as the Good News Bible, New International Version, New King James, Contemporary English Version and the Amplified Version.

One new plan I made was reading the books in the Bible in alphabetical order. Another one was reading it in order from the shortest book in number of chapters to the longest. Currently I am committed to reading the Bible in sections out loud. This is slower but it's powerful to put expression into my voice and hear the words as well as see the words.

As you can probably tell, I am passionate about reading the Bible! It's not something I feel I have to do; it's something I love to do. It strengthens me each day in a supernatural way. If I have neglected to read it I begin to notice a change in my well-being. It's like I haven't been connected to my life-giving oxygen tank and I'm starting to weaken.

I've found something cool happens when I read the Bible in different sections. It helps me see the bigger picture. My mind is able to cross-reference so I might be reading about Abraham in the Old Testament and on the same day reading about a reference to Abraham in the New Testament.

The more I read the Bible the more I understand God's nature, character and heart of love. I always get something new out of my daily Bible reading – we can never stop learning. We can never stop receiving deeper revelation or understanding from God's Word. Jesus Christ is the Word so I am aware while I'm reading the Bible it's like sitting at His feet and learning from Him. The more I read the Bible it becomes more than head knowledge. It drops deeper to become heart knowledge.

It's important to remember we can't read the Bible without the help of the Holy Spirit. Before I read I pray, *Holy Spirit, please write Your Word on my heart. Please give me the correct understanding of it and help me to obey and apply it to my every-day life.*

I hope my story has inspired you to design a Bible reading plan of your own. I'm not saying you have to read as much as me or anyone else. I'm encouraging you to create something that works well for you that you can commit to. Reading God's Word is like plugging in our phone charger to be charged up. If you find you're feeling a little flat or drained by life – plug into God's Word. It's a vital necessity for our everyday life.

Reading the Bible will influence your writing and art. It will inspire you to bring His Word into your creative communication. It will grow your faith and you will be reminded daily how much God truly loves you!

# SHORT STORY COMPETITION

We are starting 2022 with a new short story competition!

Write a short story with a Christian message beginning with the words:

Lily the labrador whined. Her head rested on Jonah's knee. She looked at him with soft brown eyes and...

Maximum word limit is 1000 words. There is no minimum word limit.

Send your entries by email to [ycwmag@nzchristianwriters.org](mailto:ycwmag@nzchristianwriters.org) with *YCW Story Comp.* in the subject line. Include your name, age and area you live in. Maximum age limit for entrants is 25 years old.

**First Prize is a Manna Store eVoucher valued at \$30.00!**

**Deadline is 6pm 30<sup>th</sup> April 2022.** More than one entry per person is permitted. Anyone up to the age of 25 is welcome to enter. There is no entry fee. Non-subscribers are welcome to enter. *Please note you can now subscribe to the digital YCW mag for free! See the link below.*

The best entries will be published in the next issue of *Young Christian Writer*.

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