

DECEMBER 2022 - JANUARY 2023

# THE CHRISTIAN Writer

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*For King and Kingdom* by Darren Green

*What it Means When I say 'I Do'*  
by Cindy David

*Demystifying Revelation*  
by Graham Missen

**Find a Local Writers Group**

**Writing Competitions and more...**

A magazine of NZ Christian Writers



**Mission:** *Connecting Christian writers in New Zealand.*

**Vision:** *To encourage and inspire Christian writers throughout New Zealand.*

**Values:** *Christian faith, God's Word, professionalism, quality and social outreach.*

**President:** Justin St Vincent: [president@nzchristianwriters.org](mailto:president@nzchristianwriters.org)

**Editor and Membership Secretary:** Kathryn Paul: [editor@nzchristianwriters.org](mailto:editor@nzchristianwriters.org)

For magazine contributions, address changes, membership queries.

**Treasurer:** For subscriptions, donations: [treasurer@nzchristianwriters.org](mailto:treasurer@nzchristianwriters.org)

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2) Printed magazine: Full membership \$55 / Student membership (up to 25yrs) \$35

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Credit/Debit card payment is available online or pay by bank deposit, phone or Internet banking to: NZ Christian Writers, a/c 12 3040 0547346 00, Reference: [Your name]

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

Mail a copy of your book to our Book Reviewer, Julia Martin

286 Karapiro Road, RD4, Cambridge 3496 or email: [reviews@nzchristianwriters.org](mailto:reviews@nzchristianwriters.org)

**The Christian Writer** is our bimonthly magazine published by NZ Christian Writers and distributed to all members. Contributions from members are always welcome. If you have some advice, encouragement, or an announcement of an event of interest to members, do send it to the editor for consideration by the 10th of the month before the next publication date. Submissions should be emailed as a word document attachment and be no more than 500 words long, except at the discretion of the editor.

The editor reserves the right to condense and/or edit any contributions for reason of space. Ideas and opinions will not be edited but editing of a technical nature may occur to maintain a high standard of writing. Views and opinions expressed do not necessarily state or reflect those of the editor.

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# The Christian Writer

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**Website:** Our user-friendly website is full of helpful information, such as details of seminars and copies of past magazines. It gives each member an online presence. Feel free to share our website link with other Christian writers so they can join us. Our members are the best advocates for growing our collective of NZ Christian Writers.

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

# President's AGM 2022 Report



During 2022, the NZ Christian Writers collective has experienced steady growth. We've had people joining us from throughout New Zealand, adding to our regional reach, and helping us

establish more local groups to serve our growing community of 320-plus Christian writers. For those who are active on social media, you'll also see our Facebook group currently has 250 members.

As we approach the end of the year, I want to extend a massive **THANK YOU!!** to our board members, competition judges, local group leaders, supporters and volunteers. You are the reason why we exist. It's thanks to you that our collective continues to attract new members and help equip people on their publishing and writing journey.



Over 20 Members contributed their answers to our social impact question: 'What do you love about NZ Christian Writers?' Their wonderful words are greatly appreciated and have been saved for possible inclusion in the special edition magazine for our 40th Anniversary.

Great news! Our 40th Anniversary Writers Retreat at Flaxmill, Whitianga is filling up. For those who haven't experienced a NZ Christian Writers Retreat, they are a unique educational opportunity to get inspired, refreshed and upskilled in your writing. We also offer retreat time and space for you to pursue your writing projects. In addition, there are opportunities to make friends and fellowship with other like-minded writers. We still have some spaces left for shared house accommodation onsite. Houses have three bedrooms and can sleep up to six people. Our current rate is \$390 per person and the venue has indicated to us their costs will increase for 2023. With this in mind, I strongly recommend you book early to be sure you get the 2022 rate, before the 2023 increase takes effect. Perhaps make it a Christmas present to yourself? If you are keen to join us, I highly recommend you secure your place by registering and paying online via our Retreat 2023 weblink:

[www.nzchristianwriters.org/retreat-2023/](http://www.nzchristianwriters.org/retreat-2023/)

Congratulations to this magazine's featured photographer, Max Carr, who shared his beautiful photo of a pōhutukawa, our New Zealand Christmas tree, for the Christmas and summer season.

On behalf of NZ Christian Writers, we pray you are blessed for the new season ahead.

Kia Manaakitia – be blessed.

Justin St Vincent

# Editorial: A Writing Revival

by Kathryn Paul



You may have heard the recent radio advertisements NZ Christian Writers has had airing on the Rhema Media stations. One of them talks about being in a 'writing revival'. These words stand out for me and it's wonderful that so many of us are joining forces, encouraging one another and making progress on our personal writing projects.

Technology allows us as Christian writers to send our words worldwide. In relation to Israel and the Bible, the country of New Zealand is considered to be 'the ends of the earth' and it's foretold we will send out praises of the Lord to the world.

Don't be discouraged if you sometimes feel like a small fish in a big pond, or a sardine crammed into a tin trying to make your writing stand out from the rest. We have an invisible but very real power behind us in the person of Father God. He has our back and wants His words of hope and encouragement to reach every tribe and tongue.



Whereas the world might be competing, trying to make the most money by having the most book sales, we have a different goal in mind. Our treasure isn't here on earth; it's contributing to the growing population of Heaven. No, I don't mean our writing bores readers to death! Our Christian writing is seed sowing, offering life, wisdom and hope. Testimonies, entertainment and other inspired writing touches hearts more deeply than people can understand. Every seed, every story is a gentle nudge into the saving arms of Jesus Christ.

So let's keep going and not give up. I encourage you to overcome any obstacles that deter you from completing your writing dreams. If you get into a slump, do something to bounce yourself out of it. Your writing contribution is an important piece of this writing revival.

With love in Jesus,  
from Kathryn.

*I love to hear from our readers! Email: [editor@nzchristianwriters.org](mailto:editor@nzchristianwriters.org)*

# Notices

## Our 40th Anniversary Retreat!!



### **Book now for our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Writers Retreat 2023!**

Accommodation is quality shared houses with bedding provided and the Retreat is fully catered. Be sure to secure your room today, visit [www.nzchristianwriters.org/retreat](http://www.nzchristianwriters.org/retreat)

### **Writers Group Leaders Wanted**

If you are willing to host a writers group please get in touch. To find out more details email Justin at [president@nzchristianwriters.org](mailto:president@nzchristianwriters.org) or Kathryn at [editor@nzchristianwriters.org](mailto:editor@nzchristianwriters.org)

### **Book Reviews Criteria**

Members are welcome to request a book review of any of their published books, whether recently released or not. The main criteria is the book has to have some Christian relevancy. For more information on how to have your book reviewed in *The Christian Writer* please refer to page two.

### **Join the NZ Christian Writers Group on Facebook**

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

### **Submissions Wanted**

More content is always needed for our magazines, *The Christian Writer* and *Young Christian Writer*. Send in your contributions by email to [editor@nzchristianwriters.org](mailto:editor@nzchristianwriters.org)

### **South Island Christian Book Authors Network**

The next meeting will be Saturday 11 February 2023. Meetings are quarterly and are specifically offered for those interested in writing a book or who have published a book. Facilitators are Verna McFelin [verna.mcfelin@gmail.com](mailto:verna.mcfelin@gmail.com) and Christine Nathan [chris@teamnathan.co](mailto:chris@teamnathan.co)



# AGM AGENDA 2022

## NZ Christian Writers | 39th Annual General Meeting

Held Online Via Zoom Meeting  
on November 17th 2022, 8:00pm – 8:30pm

**Chairperson:** Justin St Vincent. **Secretary:** Julia Martin

**Apologies:** Janet Fleming

**Minutes** from AGM 2021 read by Justin St Vincent

Motioned by: Justin St Vincent, seconded by: Julia Martin

**Financial Report:** read by Caroline Cook

ASB Balance at 17/11/2022 = \$12,152.69

*Move that the Financial Report be received*

Motioned by: Caroline Cook, seconded by: Justin St Vincent

**President's Report:** read by Justin St Vincent

*Move that the President's Report be received*

Motioned by: Justin St Vincent, seconded by Caroline Cook

**Board Update:** All Board Members to be re-elected.

### **Election of Board Members:**

**President:** Justin St Vincent

Nominated by: Kathryn Paul, seconded by Janette Busch

**Vice President:** Janet Fleming

Nominated by: Justin St Vincent, seconded by Julia Martin

**Treasurer:** Caroline Cook

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

**Magazine Editor and Membership Secretary:** Kathryn Paul

Nominated by: Janette Busch, seconded by: Caroline Cook

**Book Reviewer and Level 3 Competition Judge:** Julia Martin

Nominated by: Kathryn Paul, seconded by: Caroline Cook

**South Island Representative:** Janette Busch

Nominated by: Julia Martin, seconded by Kathryn Paul

Board Members to stand as above.

**Close:** AGM with prayer at 8:25pm

# MANUALS OF STYLE/STYLE GUIDES

## An introduction to what they are and what they are used for

by Ruth Linton

If you have ever submitted a manuscript to a publisher, you will have heard of a Style Guide. This is a document which clarifies the form of writing acceptable to the publisher and covers areas such as font size, content desired by the publication/editor, dealing with quotations and other facets of writing as diverse as grammar and page layout. For a busy publisher this is a quick efficient way of sorting manuscripts. Those that do not meet the requirements are quickly despatched to the trash—a saving of time and money for the publisher and a dreadful disappointment for the writer.

Most style guides set out the accepted style of writing in English or the official language of a country. (NB: There are differences between NZ English and US English!) A common guide used widely in the United States is *The Chicago Manual of Style* (Tauranga Christian Writers have a copy of the 16<sup>th</sup> edition published in 2010). The NZ guide is *Fit to Print – The Writing and Editing Style Guide for Aotearoa New Zealand* by Janet Hughes and Derek Wallace. (The Tauranga Writers copy was published in 2010. I haven't heard of an update!)

The New Zealand Christian Writers magazine, *The Christian Writer*, also has a style guide. However, the editorial team differ from other publishers in that they aim to encourage people to write, to express opinions, to share information about writing and to develop their writing skills. The editorial team is not paid but their goal is to publish articles to encourage writers and to print work by the members of the Collective whenever possible.

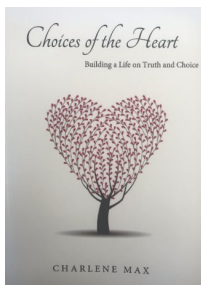
The style guide for *The Christian Writer* is in two places. Inside the front cover, the **Mission, Vision and Values** of the Collective are recorded, as well as goals of any editing carried out. Those who enter the competitions will have seen the Style Guide required for entering the competitions, usually printed on the inside of the back cover. Competition entrants who do not keep these requirements lose points and often are not placed! This is an avoidable disappointment.

Although the Editor of *The Christian Writer* is keen for people to submit writing, poems, articles and so on, we need to remember this is a voluntary role. There is no payment and the editor ('She', Kathryn at present) also has paid employment and a home to care for. Following are some suggestions to help the editor and her team of proofreaders to enrich the magazine and to ensure as many writers as possible can be published.

1. Choose items that bless spiritually or are helpful or stimulating in current society.
2. Topics clearly related to aspects of writing are always useful. A different approach to an old topic can also be useful.
3. Where possible, limit the submission to 500 words. (This does not completely exclude longer, in-depth articles and stories or a series published in successive magazines. If uncertain, email the editor and check.) If submitting a picture/photo make sure it is appropriate and of high quality. Most cameras these days take high-quality pictures without fancy settings.
4. For poetry have clear line setting out and aim to have 30 lines or fewer.
5. Before submitting anything have it checked. If you belong to a local group that is an excellent place to have it evaluated. Check for punctuation and spelling errors. Ask for suggestions for improvements.
6. If you are not in a local group, find someone in your family, community or church whose opinion you respect. (A friend or family member who thinks you are 'the bees knees' and can do no wrong is NOT a good choice! Criticism can be a great tool for improvement.)
7. When you have done all you can, submit the article to the editor ([editor@nzchristianwriters.org](mailto:editor@nzchristianwriters.org)) with confidence. We will be pleased to consider it for the magazine.

*Young Christian Writer* magazine is out now! Sign up for a **FREE** digital subscription today! (Note this special offer doesn't include *The Christian Writer*.) Click here to sign up to *Young Christian Writer*: <http://eepurl.com/hSQOhX>





### Choices of the Heart

By Charlene Max

Review by Julia Martin

Printed by BookPrint 2021

It's a pleasure to read and review another self-published collection of meditations and spiritual insights written by someone who desires to share her Christian faith and love for the Lord.

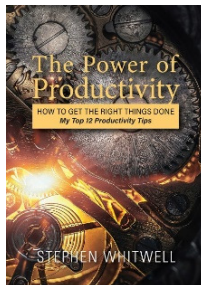
Charlene has served alongside her husband Gary in fulltime Christian ministry for more than 50 years. Originally from America, the couple arrived in New Zealand in 1983 and for the past 25 years have lived in Dunedin where they have pastored a Baptist Church.

Charlene has named her collection of 60 devotionals 'Choices of the Heart' because she believes the choices we make today will be the life we live tomorrow.

In each devotional she starts with scripture, followed by a brief comment often drawn from her experiences in everyday life and the wisdom she has gained over the years as a follower of Jesus Christ. Many of her devotionals include short poems she has written that accompany her theme for the day, such as:

'Thank You Lord for helping me to see,  
The awesome one I'm created to be.  
Not the best or the worst,  
Just beautiful, one of a kind, me.'

Her meditations each day end with the challenge of a personal choice she encourages the reader to make. e.g. Today Choose 'To stand unashamedly for that which is right, and lovingly against that which is wrong.' Charlene concludes that making the right choices can bring peace for today and hope for tomorrow.



### The Power of Productivity

By Stephen Whitwell

Review by Julia Martin

Published by Good Words  
Tauranga 2022

Charles E Hummel wrote a book entitled *Tyranny of the Urgent* in which he claimed, 'Your greatest danger is letting the urgent things crowd out the important.'

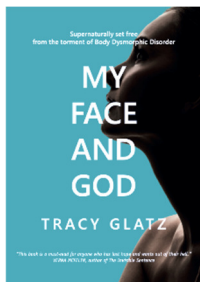
Stephen Whitwell would agree with that statement I'm sure as in this practical little book he outlines his proven 12 top tips for Christian productivity which he has gleaned from many years of busyness as a pastor, speaker, writer and administrator.

He asks the questions: Is there such a thing as Christian productivity and is God concerned about the productivity of His people? He believes the answer to both questions is 'Yes' and lists three principles on which to focus:

1. Make sure God comes first.
2. Make sure your heart is right.
3. Make sure we're doing what God wants us to do.

Stephen then outlines his top 12 productivity tips for living a productive life that is pleasing to God. There's nothing radical among them – most are common sense, practical but challenging. His tips include: Look after yourself, Limit Social Media, Say "No" more, Be flexible. He writes: 'Life is better when we're doing the things we must do; we find there's energy, passion, dreams and visions in that area, and we lose track of time'. He concludes: 'Knowing you've brought Him glory by being fruitful and productive is a great place to be'.

I believe this little book is an excellent guide for Christians from any walk of life who struggle with time management and long to get the right things done that will bring glory to God.



### My Face and God

By Tracy Glatz

Review by Julia Martin

Available through Amazon and [www.tracyglatz.co.nz](http://www.tracyglatz.co.nz)

Born in 1980 into a large Catholic family in Ireland, Tracy was afflicted at an early age with a debilitating psychiatric condition called 'body dysmorphic disorder' (BDD) whereby she had a distorted perception of her appearance—notably her nose, lips and hair. This paranoia led to strange obsessive behaviour, and despite graduating from university and holding down good jobs in Ireland and later in New Zealand, alcohol and drugs became the coping mechanism for her toxic and destructive lifestyle.

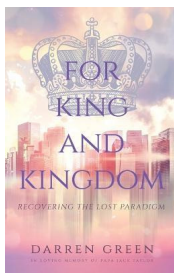
Battling every problem imaginable—including eating disorders, bullying, broken relationships, depression, suicidal impulses, false religion and spiritual warfare caused Tracy to be a shattered, dysfunctional individual.

Humanly speaking Tracy's future was grim, but God had plans for her life. When she looks back on her past with hindsight, she can see His Sovereign hand slowly drawing her to Himself, often through strange and unusual means.

With honesty and immense courage she reveals her painful journey from utter brokenness to the point where she could claim: 'I was a child of God with multiple components of beauty on an emotional, mental and spiritual level.'

While her previous self-worth had been based on her distorted image, her new identity was now grounded in God Himself. It's a powerful story that will give hope and freedom to all those who are struggling and see no way out of their personal difficulties.

Is anything too hard for God? The answer is NO – and Tracy's story is proof of that!



### For King and Kingdom

By Darren Green

Review by Julia Martin

Published by Trilogi Christian Publishers 2022

Born in New Zealand, Darren serves as a missionary in the Asia Pacific region.

In this book he explains his radical change of thinking which he describes as a paradigm shift. Previously the author knew Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour and he preached a gospel based on being saved from hell and going to heaven.

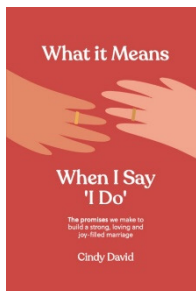
The focus was on teaching the Word, planting churches, and training workers – but something seemed to be missing. He felt he lacked the abundant life Jesus promised.

After speaking to a friend, described as his spiritual father, Darren's thinking changed and he discovered the lost paradigm for King and Kingdom.

This Kingdom paradigm shift is an all-or-nothing proposition. Kingdom teaching is nothing new. It's mentioned 150 times in the New Testament and the message Jesus taught was Kingdom centred.

Darren sees no separation between Kingdom life and the secular. He believes the Kingdom of God is here right now and involves our participation as salt and light in the world. He claims: 'The centre of history is the King and His Kingdom. Not an organization, not church meetings, nothing else. History is His story. We have ended up reducing Jesus to a religion and calling it Christianity, then named those who follow Christ as Christians'.

Not everyone will agree with Darren's claims, but he does back up his teaching with an abundance of scripture and his paradigm is worthy of consideration.



### What it Means When I Say 'I Do'

By Cindy David

Review by Debbie McDermott

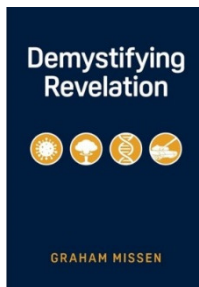
Published by Wild Side  
Publishing

Containing 35 in-depth promises and a treasure trove of wise, godly counsel, *What It Means When I Say 'I do'* is among the finest pieces of literature on the topic of marriage that I have ever read. It is also a manual, with each of the 35 promises providing good guidelines on how spouses can build and sustain a strong, loving and joy-filled marriage as they come to understand that 'love is not only a word that describes feelings of affection but it is also an action word—a seed you plant in your heart and in the heart of your beloved, and nurture every day'.

Of particular note is the beautiful simplicity of the whole book. While each promise is underlined by colourful illustrations (created by Cindy's daughter, Sabrina) and an appropriate verse from the Bible on how God wants us to behave towards each other, there is nothing preachy or sanctimonious in how they have been presented to the reader. Rather, each promise—if faithfully kept—will work towards keeping the relationship with our spouse healthy and intact.

While this easy-to-read book is targeted more towards a Christian audience, I believe it will be well received by anyone who is really committed to making their marriage work.

In her introduction, Cindy asks us to consider the words of Gary Thomas: 'A good marriage is not something you find—it is something you work for.'



### Demystifying Revelation

By Graham Missen

Review by Stephen Whitwell

Self published 2022

*Demystifying Revelation* by Graham Missen is a must have about the Book of Revelation. It is not just a copy of his notes used for a group study. This is something much more.

This book will find pride of place on the desks and bookshelves of those with a casual interest in eschatology (the study of end-time events), the novice student of the book of Revelation, and also those students with an ardent and passionate interest in the Bible's prophetic plan of events as the Apostle John wrote them in the Book of Revelation.

Graham lays out the events of the time of the end thoroughly and Biblically, with ample cross referencing and understandable explanations of the challenges of interpreting the book.

This book is more than a book you'd read and gain much from. It is a reference book; it is a textbook; it is a clear and easily readable presentation of end time events. It is one of those books I believe will grace the reader's bookshelf as a go-to when needing to have a plain and followable account of God's prophetic calendar.

It is very timely that this book has arrived on the scene. The world we live in can be confusing and fearful. But the message of this book points us to a loving God who is Creator, Master and the One who is actually in control. It'll be an asset to any reader's library and you won't be disappointed having it handy.

# Tips From an Editor

## What you need to check (or choose) before starting (or opening) a new file

by Janette Busch

I know it is easy to open a new file and immediately start writing. However, there are a number of actions that are best to do first that will make your document easier to manage and potentially stop time-consuming changes being needed later.

In this first article I will concentrate on the changes you need to make/check on a new file in Word. I will write about other things to check in later articles.

- Under Layout – all new computers have their page size set to Letter. This needs to be changed to A4 (or another metric size) – as used in NZ.
- Under Paragraph/Indents and Spacing – the default setting in Word is either Multiple 1.15 or Multiple 1.08. You need to change these settings to either single spacing or 1.5 line spacing and set Spacing Before to 0 pt. Not doing this will cause all sorts of issues when you try to format your document; most noticeable is that the page numbers will be too high from the bottom of the page. NB – the settings for this magazine are different – these recommendations are for your own writing.
- Under Layout/Margins – the Normal/default settings for margins in a new document are 2.54 cm for all sides of the page. I will deal with Mirror Margins (when printing double sided) later.
- Home/Font – there are two main different types of fonts to choose from, serif (with ‘feet’) and sans serif (without ‘feet’). For example: popular serif fonts are: Times New Roman, Garamond, and Courier New, and popular sans serif fonts are: Helvetica, Calibri and Tahoma. Sans serif fonts are commonly used for documents on the internet.
- Justification – there are two main types of justification. The icons are found under Paragraph/General/Alignment where you can choose left, centred, right or justified (sometimes also called ragged right). While people like the look of fully justified text Word does not maintain the same spacing between the words so sometimes what are called ‘rivers of white’ can form randomly and are unsightly through the text. Books, which commonly use full justification, use special programs that prevent this happening.
- Language – under Home/Review/Language/Set Proofing Language to NZ English and set as default.
- Paragraphs – there are two ways to space paragraphs in a document: 1) with a blank line between each paragraph; 2) with no line between paragraphs but with an indent, except for the first paragraph in a document, which has no indent.



# Tribute to Brian Taylor

by Justin St Vincent

Hello everyone. This is a tribute to Brian Taylor written by Justin St Vincent, president of New Zealand Christian Writers:

Brian was a humble man who I had the privilege of knowing for close to fifteen years. I remember working alongside Brian's daughter, Claire, at Rhema Media and Brian being an amazing advocate and spiritual ambassador for our mission. He knew the impact of the Gospel to transform lives for good. Brian loved our ministry of connecting people to Christ and wanted others to know Him.

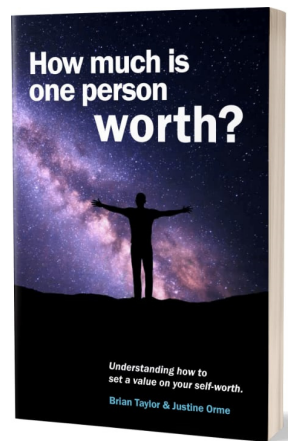
When I think of Brian, I remember how much he loved Jesus. We rest in the knowledge that Brian is now with Him, the author, perfecter and cornerstone of our Christian faith. Brian had a contagious enthusiasm for faith and family—two significant parts of his life and legacy that I will remember and cherish. He had a passion for life and sharing the love of Jesus throughout his life. Brian was not only a Christian writer. He was a father, husband, businessman, mentor, friend and positive role model to so many in his church and community.

As many of you know, Brian had a wonderful sense of humour which endeared him to those with whom he came into contact. It is a great testament to his humble and humorous nature that he formed so many long-lasting friendships over the years. We pay respect and tribute to a man of faith who I believe must have made a significant impact on countless people.

I remember being part of sharing Brian's brilliant book: *The Marriage You Never Dreamed Of: Practical Steps to Extraordinary Lasting Love* at Promise Keepers men's ministry events, on Rhema Media's broadcasting networks and at seminars and retreats for New Zealand Christian Writers.

Brian's books and writing are part of his legacy, one that is filled with faith, hope and love. It was due to his caring nature that he wanted others to benefit from finding extraordinary lasting love. Brian may never have foreseen the incredible impact and positive influence he would have on the marriages and relationships of those who would read his books.

Even more recently, Brian Taylor and Justine Orme published *How Much is One Person Worth?: Understanding How To Set a Value on Your Self Worth*. Brian and Justine wrote how, 'The purpose of this book is to provide answers for people who want to blossom, to flourish as whole people'. Brian was successful at sharing his life insights and wisdom with people. His publishing and speaking business, **Acorns To Oak Trees**, can be seen as Brian's personal metaphor for living a life of purpose. He knew great things come from small beginnings. This truth still stands; mighty oaks from little acorns grow.



In an essay by D Everett in *The Columbian Orator*, 1797, the inspirational quote is found: 'Large streams from little fountains flow, tall oaks from little acorns grow.' Perhaps Brian knew this principle more than most. At Brian's passing we have lost a mighty oak tree of faith, yet his legacy lives on through his family, friends, community, church, books and his writing.

As the famous saying goes: 'Something great can come from a modest beginning. Don't give up—mighty oaks from little acorns grow!' I believe this is part of Brian's legacy: the seed of faith, watered with hope, in an environment of love. If we are to reflect on a life well-lived, it is to echo the words that Brian would have heard from his Heavenly Father, "Well done, good and faithful servant." I am convinced Brian would want us all to know the blessing that comes from having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Brian would share that your life has meaning, it has a purpose, and a God-given value that only YOU can bring to the world.

In closing, may we find comfort in sharing God's Word from Second Corinthians chapter one, verses three to four:

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.*

**Bible Reference:** 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, New King James Version



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## ASTUTE EDITING

### Candice Hume

E: [info@astuteediting.co.nz](mailto:info@astuteediting.co.nz)

## A WORD ABOUT EDITING

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

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

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

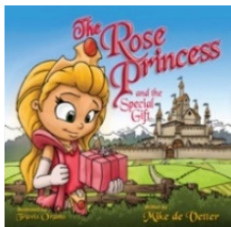
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## BOOK ILLUSTRATOR

Travis Orams is an experienced children's book illustrator. He recently illustrated *The Rose Princess and the Special Gift* by Pastor Mike de Vetter, and *Brooklyn Builds a Bridge* by Stacey Mareroa-Roberts. If you have wonderful worlds and characters you want illustrated, Travis would love to hear from you.

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## CHRISTIAN EDITING

My name is Lola Goulton and I run Christian Editing Services.

I hold a Bachelor of Commerce Degree in marketing and have over twenty years' experience in human resources, including writing and editing a company newsletter, developing a government website, contributing to a textbook, and writing and proofreading more client reports than I can count.

I specialise in editing Christian fiction and advising pre-published and self-published authors on the business side of writing, publishing and marketing. Find out more at <https://christianediting.co.nz/resources/> or <https://christianediting.co.nz/blog/> and sign up for a free two-week course on revising and self-editing your novel.

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## WRITING ANSWERS

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

I work with authors to prepare their work for self-publishing. I make sure their documents are print ready and, for example, I tell them that they do need to use mirror margins on their documents and no, the printer won't do that for you.

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

**Janette Busch**

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## New Group – Nelson Christian Writers

by Kay Peterson

Author, Kay Peterson has launched Christian Writers meetings in Nelson. The meetings have attracted a wide range of age groups and different levels from beginner writers to published ones.

Kay wrote her first novel in 2020 during the Covid lockdown but struggled to get it into bookshops. It was a feeling of isolation that drew her to answer an advertisement she saw on Facebook for NZ Christian Writers and *The Christian Writer* magazine. From there, after a conversation with a friend who also writes, it was a simple step to begin a writer's group in Nelson with the support of the voluntary staff of the magazine.

The Nelson group is diverse in both age and writing genres. Anyone interested in joining can contact Kay at [kaypeterson4@xtra.co.nz](mailto:kaypeterson4@xtra.co.nz) or on her mobile phone 027 547 677.



# **Te Harinui**

## **(Great Joy)**

### **NZ Christmas Carol**

by Frederick Swallow



**Now in this blessed land,  
United heart and hand,  
We praise the glorious Birth  
And sing to all the earth:  
Te Harinui, te harinui, te  
harinui  
Glad tidings of great joy.**

New Zealand composer, Katherine Faith 'Willow' Macky QSM wrote these words and music in 1957 to mark the first Christmas Day service given by Samuel Marsden to Māori chiefs, their people and a party from the sailing ship *Active* at Oihi Bay in the beautiful Bay of Islands on December 19, 1814.

One of New Zealand's leading composers, Willow Macky wrote folk style music and ballads about New Zealand's history, land and people because we have a country as beautiful, interesting and worthy as any other.

*Verse courtesy of Alfred Music Publishing.*

*Picture courtesy of  
[www.freechristianillustrations.com](http://www.freechristianillustrations.com)*

# **Complete**

by Stephen Douglas

Jesus  
you mingled with the crowd  
and Mary came to anoint your feet.  
May I too humble myself,  
come away from my 'google' crowd,  
and allow your Spirit to lead me.  
To pause, to give way to stillness  
and there engage  
in communion with thee,  
Jesus the Nazarene.

Scripture describes me  
like □ sheep; gone □ str□y,  
going my own way.  
I repent of my going away and  
bow with humility of spirit, mind and will.  
I pause, and ask for your love to wash.

Now may the Father's love come freely  
in union with his Holy Spirit.  
Guide and teach me  
how to do as Mary did,  
with tears and perfume,  
bow at Jesus' feet and there,  
Wash with tears of joy your feet.

Jesus  
You're the Father's appointed sacrifice  
atonement, now complete.  
I rejoice and enjoy the embrace  
of Saviour Christ,  
who makes my living complete!

# Miracle Joy

by Gloria Hettige

Born to parents who lived with expectant hearts over seven years. Our Lord did not disappoint us. Getting up one morning, feeling hopeless, bursting with joy to hear that I have conceived.

Nine months turns to nine months of learning, nurturing, imagining, preparing, listening and ultimately handling the bundle of amazing joy. Wow – a boy was born unto us!

Each day draws and passes by, looking at this amazing joy, sighing silently with whispered prayers. Each moment cherished, inspired to nurture the way our Lord has laid it out to be.

Pinning hope that my joyous son will grow and mould into a person of greatness. There I wait to visualize, to bring our only gifted son, the way a vine grows to produce beautiful grapes, producing lush juice, too exhilarating to speak. The vine cultivated in a well sourced stressed soil, made to produce grapes that ultimately sweeten the tongue of any who taste it.

So much to be told of his growing up, treasured within a mother's heart. Believing daily he will step up to become someone significant and then seeing he did.

There our son grows tumbling, crawling, stepping up to walk. Mother's heart goes into a clapping and cheering mood; wow great achievement, our son. What a comfort to know our son is reaching a milestone. Sprawling up the growing vine. He is our son.

Here comes learning. Remember the times without a day going by: sitting against the padded tripillow; repeatedly reading aloud the frog tales pop up pictures; entertained for hours. Music within the creative courtyard, rising jubilation, gladdening the hearts. There springs the talents for music, drama, speech, singing, reading, writing. "More mummy, more mummy," come the shouts of joy. Constant craving produces the art of rendering much to one's heart and soul.

Mother sighs. It is a miracle.

A vine stretches its way out searching the universe, producing a branch, producing the world's richest produce, feeding the multitudes, never thirsting again.

There you wait, equipped in wholesome grace. Hurray! Upholding truth, acting with integrity and honesty like the choicest perfume impacting people you surround. Mother's heart speaks aloud.

Now we release you to unite with a lovely woman, together walking hand in hand to fulfil a purpose, to lay down a legacy for generations to come.

Son's path from biochemist to musician, a doctor alas, there to continue with whatever our Lord has laid on his heart.

May I now stand to say, 'Son you can, you will, the sky is the limit'. May you be filled with dreams and a vision to rise up with the music that your heart makes all of the time.

Blessings. Blessings be upon you and your wife for generations to come. Live abundantly and richly so you can pass on the goodness the Lord has laid on our hearts.

Always your blessed and loving Mum.

# Join a Writers Group

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# W E L C O M E

## New and Returning Members:

### Agnes Winter

Timaru

### Angela Robb

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### Darrell Curtis

Auckland North

### Denese Schick

Kerikeri

### Doritha Vili

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### Jessica Thomas

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### Julianne Jones

Whanganui

### Julie Collins

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### Mary Davie- Martin

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### Robyn Wylie

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### Summer Parkhill

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**All NZCW members are  
invited to share a Writer  
Profile and Book  
Feature(s) on our  
website.**

**For details email our  
NZCW president,  
Justin St Vincent here:**

[president@nzchristianwriters.org](mailto:president@nzchristianwriters.org)

# Made for TV

by Frances Hall

I've been thinking about the first Christmas. What if it had been launched by a decent PR firm with me in charge?

I mean it all seems a bit understated to me; a teenage girl chosen from an ordinary home to give birth to the son of God. There wasn't even a nationwide search with auditions like *Israel's Got Talent*. And I'd have chosen a famous star for the job; maybe a Britney Spears or a Taylor Swift; someone really popular for goodness sake. Just imagine the media frenzy! The press would've been all over Bethlehem like a rash, dying to get the first pictures.



And the build up to the great event could've been handled much better also. Britney could've brought out a new range of maternity wear, some cool hipster pants and a midriff top printed with the words 'Are you ready to meet your God?' or something else equally clever.

What about those exotic three-wise-dudes? I bet they wore those cool shoes with the turned-up toes. I'd sell exclusive rights to Hannah's to reproduce them under license—with royalties coming to my company, of course.

And I'd have produced a documentary called *The Immaculate Conception; The Real Story*.

And then there's the potential in that poor little donkey, trudging through the snow, maybe getting lame and barely making it to the stable. The cameras could record its last desperate heehaws. Donkey food sales would go through the roof.



But God had other plans. He dropped into the world virtually unannounced. Just a few wise men, a handful of shepherds, a husband and a few farm animals were witnesses to the greatest show on earth. And the only obvious big star was in the sky.

Yeah, I'd have done it differently, but I wasn't asked and I can't save the world. And that's why He's God and I'm not. Merry Christmas.



# The Christmas King

by Rodney Hickman

In Bethlehem City a long time ago  
The King of Kings was born you know  
It was a humble start, I can only say  
But the world would be changed from that very day

Now that city of old was fast asleep  
Except for shepherds and their flock of sheep  
Today I think it's a very strange thing  
That the world's asleep to this risen King

For He listens to the words we pray  
And visits each along life's way  
His name is Jesus, He longs to be our friend  
And walk with us to our very end.



**Can God be both God and man –  
King and servant?**

## God is:The Servant King

by [www.freechristianillustrations.com](http://www.freechristianillustrations.com)

Have you ever considered that a 'good' king is a servant to his people? He holds his power and position for the betterment of his subjects. He is not above the laws he makes, he is subject to them. He always has his nation's best interests at heart and is willing to lay down his life for his people.

Jesus Christ is known as the Lord of Lords and King of Kings. As confusing as it seems, Jesus Christ is both God and man (separate and united). Revelation states: *'I am the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, says the Lord, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.'* As God, Jesus is Sovereign over all His creation, yet still He serves mankind daily with oxygen, gravity and sunshine. Matthew 28:18 states: *And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."* As man, Jesus is subject to all the laws that God has decreed (the many commandments). He is also subject to all the laws of perfection. He must always be righteous, fair, truthful and sinless. Hebrews 4:15 states: *For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weakness, but in all points was tempted as we are, yet without sin.*

Furthermore as with any good king, Christ has shown He is willing to lay down His life for the safety of His people. John 10:11 states: *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep."* Christ went willingly to the cross to pay the penalty of sin so all who believe in Him may have eternal life. John 3:16. When the Son of God first came to earth as a man, He came to fulfil His role as a servant. The next time Christ comes to earth, He will be exhibiting His entire divine splendour and be equipped with all His kingly powers. *'If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.'* Colossians 3:1

# Writing Competitions Points Board

Level One		Level Two		Level Three	
Lijlanie Stander	27	Clive McKegg	30	Pat Kerr	48
Rachel Jessop	27	Kathryn Paul	27	Jean Crane	42
Taylor Foster	24	Jill Clarke	21	Pauline Marshall	42
Fiona Murray	21	Susan Flanagan	18	Ruth Jamieson	21
Stephen Douglas	12	Pam Driver	15	Jean Shewan	18
Karen Baird	9	Sue Shelton	12	Ella Hamlin	18
				Janet Fleming	18
				Lois Farrow	15
				Heather Vincent	12

Congratulations to our first, second and third prize winners for the competitions ending December 2022! The following writers have been promoted to a higher level: Lijlanie Stander, Taylor Foster, Fiona Murray, Clive McKegg and Kathryn Paul. Well done! Also, congratulations to Pat Kerr who is promoted to the NZ Christian Writers Honours List!

We have great news for Level Three contestants. From 2023 the Level Three competitions will now also be six monthly which means double the chance to win a prize each year!

Competition points now go back to zero for the February 2023 competitions. In each magazine, place getters receive points: 15 points for first, 12 points for second and 9 points for third. At the end of May and November, those with the highest points in Levels One, Two and Three will be awarded monetary prizes for first, second and third.

Prizes up for grabs are: **\$60 for First Place**, **\$50 for Second Place**, **\$40 for Third place**. These are awarded as Manna Christian Store e-vouchers via email. Our next prize winners will be published in the Jun-Jul 2023 magazine edition.

All new members begin by entering in Level One. To be promoted to Level Two or Three, contestants need to receive points at least three times on their current level. Our judges also require regular entries and improved writing. All entrants receive helpful constructive feedback via email from the judges.



# Competition Results

## Level One

**Judge: Debbie McDermott**

**Requirement:** Imagine you are either Joseph or Mary (Jesus' earthly parents) and rewrite the Christmas story as you think they would have experienced it. Ensure you use the first person point of view (i.e. I, my, we, our). (500 words)

### General Comments

*It was pleasing to receive ten good entries to this competition. Each retelling of the Christmas story was well done and a couple of the entrants touched on interesting aspects I had not considered before. For instance, Fiona Murray's suggestion that the cloths used to swaddle Baby Jesus may have originally been set aside for the sacrificial lambs is particularly thought-provoking. So many scriptures and events foreshadow our Lord's sacrifice for us. Why not the swaddling cloths also?*

*Each entrant successfully told their story in the first person point of view. Five of the ten stories were written from Mary's perspective, while the other five were written from Joseph's perspective. It should be noted here that eight of the ten entrants were women and I highly commend the three ladies who chose to tell Joseph's side of the Christmas story. Women tend to be more sentimental than men so it was important for them to use a more pragmatic style in order to prevent Joseph's narrative from becoming mushy. This they did very well.*

*Equally pleasing was the standard of writing which was generally high. This meant there was little difference in marks between the winning entries and those who missed out on being awarded a place. Minor issues that resulted in a loss of marks included overusing/misusing commas or not using commas where needed; leaving out apostrophes; using hyphens instead of dashes; incorrectly capitalising common nouns; and wrong formatting. This has been discussed in my critiques to entrants.*

*There were also two major issues that some entrants need to address:*

- 1. Heading/Title**—all entries **MUST** have a short title written in Title Case (refer to formatting requirements in the magazine). For this competition, it was also important to have a suitable title or accompanying subtitle noting this was the Christmas story told from Joseph or Mary's point of view.
- 2. Biblical Accuracy**—it is vitally important to ensure you do not misquote or contradict scripture when retelling a Bible story, as this can be highly misleading for an uninformed or non-Christian reader.

# First Place



Lijlanie  
Stander  
of Wainui,  
Auckland

## My Greatest Joy

Our greatest joy is often intertwined with our deepest sorrow. This journey has been a hard one. My darling Joseph is trying his utmost to keep me comfortable. He has walked all the way, gently guiding the young donkey he borrowed from his father. The census could not have come at a more inconvenient time. If my calculations were correct, the baby is not due for another couple of weeks. All should be well.

Suddenly a sharp pain shoots through my abdomen and into my hips. I draw my breath in sharply, trying not to alarm Joseph who is already fraught with worry. Joseph immediately stops and turns around. "My beloved, are you all right?" he gently enquires. I nod and manage to smile bravely at him. Every uneven movement of this donkey is torture. My Little Miracle kicks against my ribs and pushes onto my bladder as if he is trying to find a way out.

"Look, Mary! There are the first houses on the outskirts of Bethlehem," Joseph says with audible relief. How blessed am I that this man chose to be my husband! Another man would have walked away. Although confused at first, Joseph believed my account of the miraculous conception after the angel appeared to him.

Another sharp pain forces me to groan as we enter the main street of Bethlehem. Joseph ties the donkey to a post. "You wait here, my beloved. I will enquire at the Inn." The blankets covering the saddle underneath me feels warmer than before and...wet! Oh, no! This happened to Elizabeth just before little John was born. "Joseph!" I call out.

Joseph come rushing down the steps, followed by the Innkeeper. "It's time!" I cry. "Follow me," the Innkeeper replies. Joseph lifts me off the donkey and carries me effortlessly in his muscular arms. He whispers calming, soothing words in my ear. "I am sorry, but this is all I have available," the Innkeeper says as he leads us into the stable. Nothing about this pregnancy has been normal.

My contractions are now very close together. Joseph mentions something about a midwife, but I grab his arm and shake my head. Understanding dawns in his eyes. "We can do this, my beloved!" A warm, golden light fills the stable and my body starts to tingle. I am not sure whether the pain is causing me to lose consciousness or whether Someone else is numbing my pain. Suddenly a bright light flashes before my eyes. Utter silence follows. I hold my breath. My baby's cry breaks the silence.

The midwife rushes into the stable just as Joseph puts our Little Miracle into my arms. “Jesus,” I whisper. He looks at me and love overwhelms me. It is as if his eyes recognise me. He truly sees me as I have never been seen before. I look up at Joseph and see the revelation within my soul reflecting in his eyes. “Immanuel!” Joseph exclaims. “God is truly with us!”

## Second Place Equal



Fiona  
Murray  
of Lincoln,  
Selwyn  
District,  
Canterbury

### He has come

My heart is full. My precious one has finally come. I am in love. He is perfect. I touch his tiny fingers. I stroke his sleeping face. He has come.

I lift my eyes to the darkness of my surroundings—a cave belonging to a kind stranger. My lips move in silence.

“Thank you, Adonai.”

My sight rests upon this little boy once again. Wrapped in linens of white, he squirms, then settles in my arms.

I am grateful we found more linen to use. It was already here, folded neatly and tucked away. Perhaps it was here for the newborn lambs. The lambs purposed for sacrifice.

And now I have swaddled my newborn son in these sacrificial cloths.

I hear Joseph preparing a bed for our child. I hear him praying to you, Adonai, while he moves about.

My beloved Joseph. We have been through so much. And in everything, he kept my honour. He cherished me with Your love.

And he loves Your son as his own.

I am so tired. Give me strength Adonai. To take care of my new family. To make sense of how this has all happened. And it happened here. I don't even know where I am.

If he has come to save us, why here? Why has he entered our world here?

In the darkness, there is light. Light is seeping in, exposing the crudeness of the cave.

Where is that light coming from? It is nighttime Adonai. How can this light be?

My mind wanders to exhaustion. My body is sore. I wish to sleep and shut my eyes. But I must stay awake for this treasured baby I am holding. I shift my position, grimacing with pain.

He opens his tiny eyes, searching for my face. They rest upon me, and for a moment, I gaze back, adoration bursting within my soul. He has come.

Joseph takes him from my arms.

“Sleep, beloved. Get some rest. I will take care of him.”

I drift into a fitful sleep, knowing I am blessed. More blessed than I will ever know.

I hear voices outside. I see unknown faces appearing at the mouth of the cave.

Startled, I squint my eyes. Who are they? Joseph is talking to them. I am thankful for his protection.

He invites them in to meet our son. I am filled with shock and surprise. The visitors are shepherds.

Our first visitors are shepherds. Shepherds? Don't You know they are despised? Nobody wants to know them. They want nothing to do with them.

I sit up, knowing Your word cuts deep into my heart. I know full well when I am wrong. Again.

Forgive me Adonai. For everyone is the same to You. They have come because You have called them. You sent them a messenger as You sent me all those months ago.

Have I not realised one thing? You have come in the weak, the lowly, the helpless, the vulnerable.

He is here. He has come.

## Second Place Equal



Rachel  
Jessop  
of Stirling

## Blessed

I stroke the softness of my sleeping boys cheek, watch his little chest rise and fall, note the gentle curls in his dark hair. What a journey we had been on!

I allow my thoughts to wander back to that day – it seemed so long ago – when the angel Gabriel had come and announced such outrageous news: I was to be the most blessed mother of all time! After the initial fright, it all seemed so straightforward. But how far from that it had been.

Going to see Elizabeth had been such joy! She was the only other person on the earth who knew, who understood, and who supported me. It was so special, such an encouragement... and I was going to need it.

Because then it was back home with a heavy heart, to my family and their deep hurt. I had been a good girl and sensible; I'm not sure if it was them thinking I was a fornicator or an unhinged liar that was the most painful to bear. They never looked at me the same again. Most of them never looked at me again at all. I was dead to them. Obeying God did have a price to pay.

And then telling Joseph. The shock, the hurt in his eyes was the hardest of all. Why hadn't the Lord sent the angel to tell Joseph before I had to tell him? It would have saved us both so much deep anguish. But the Lord doesn't always make it an easy path. Truly his ways are not our ways.

Then the census, the trip to Bethlehem, nowhere to stay and the birthing pains starting. Was this really what the Lord wanted for his Son? But then the Lord provided himself a place - warm, dry, sheltered from the weather, from danger and from prying eyes. It was a blessing indeed, that little stable.

I can't help but smile – what a place for the Lord to send his little Son to! He could have sent him to a palace, but God's heart is with his people, as it always has been - whether in slavery, in the wilderness, or in a stable in a small town.

And then that day when the magnificent Magi came from the East – how surreal it all seemed now! Gifts no-one knew would be so desperately needed, after Joseph's dream that got us all up in the night to head to Egypt. Saving our little son's life, the life of God's Son.

It was frightening in Egypt – the strange language, strange culture, knowing no-one. And yet the Lord's hand was over us, giving us protection, provision and peace. God has been so good to us, so faithful.

And now back to Nazareth.

"Can anything good come from Nazareth?" they say. I say yes. This child will change the world.

For all the trials, challenges and difficulties - I kiss my child's warm cheek - truly I am the most blessed mother ever.



## Third Place



Karen  
Baird  
of Auckland

### The Unexpected Father

A rewrite of the Christmas story from  
Joseph's perspective

As we wearily approached the house, I saw a faint light coming from the guest room window illuminating the darkness. My heart sank. I hadn't expected that. It had taken me a while to get over the last unexpected event - when Mary, my betrothed, became pregnant and not by me! Oh, the judgement and rejection I had faced from family and friends because of the illegitimate child! Pulling out from my swirling emotions, I forced myself to think about how I could find shelter in Bethlehem for my heavily pregnant wife. I recalled my dream where the angel appeared and told me to trust Mary when she said that she was pregnant by the Holy Spirit. I chastised myself. *God, you have brought us this far. I know that you do things differently and unexpectedly. Help me to keep trusting you. You prepared Mary to be my wife and the mother of Jesus; you must have something prepared for us now.*

"We're almost there, my love," I said to Mary. As I looked into her eyes, I realised how exhausted she looked. It had been a long, hard week of travel by donkey from Nazareth. Her eyes began to sparkle with joy, awe, and excitement as she said "Soon we will meet the prophesied Messiah, *our son Joseph!*" *Thank you God for giving me this woman, her faith in you is unwavering. She has found favour not only in your eyes but my eyes too.*

As we reached the house a man bellowed "Who is there at this late hour?" As he appeared, I recognised the remnants of my cousin's boyish face in this grown man. "Joseph!" he exclaimed, enveloping me in a hug. "I know it is late ..." I said meekly. He pulled away from me and looked at Mary "And this must be your wife. Oh! And she is pregnant!" His smile turned to a frown "Joseph, I'm sorry but my guest room is already full," he said as he looked back at me with empathy on his face. "I wish I could help. The only place I can think of is the stable where we keep the animals. It's not ideal, I know, but it will keep you all warm and dry." "Thank you, cousin!" I replied.

As Mary laboured, I was so focused on her and the baby that I did not even notice the animals' sounds or smells. Sometime later, as the sound of a new born baby's cries rang through the air, I looked at Mary holding her baby boy. I wondered at how God had chosen me, a young carpenter, to be a part of the amazing birth of his son, the prophesied Messiah, saviour of the world!

As she passed the baby boy to me, wrapped in swaddling clothes, I was overcome with emotion. *God, I prayed silently, I will love and raise this son as my own.* I did what God asked me to do, I named him Jesus. In doing so I adopted him as my own.

# Level Two

## Judge: Lesley Edgeler

**Requirement:** Author, Charles Martin, wrote: 'Music washes us from the inside out. It heals what nothing else can.' How would you respond to this statement? Name a favourite song or hymn which you believe has this effect on you and say why. (350 words)

### General Comments

*Both Plato and Aristotle affirmed that 'Music contained an intrinsic element that was conducive to the promotion of moral or spiritual harmony and order in the soul.' Music is truly a gift from God which can calm, soothe, heal, uplift, comfort and enable us to 'feel'. A universal language of the soul, music connects everyone in spite of their background and country of birth.*

*During the Covid lockdowns, one song had an impact in many countries of the world: The Blessing. This song linked us all together in a universal statement that all would be well, that we would get through and see better days.*

*Jehoshaphat sent out singers ahead of his army; the angels sang news of Christ's birth and Paul and Silas sang praises to God at midnight during their time in prison. All these show us just how important music is to God. In Zephaniah 3:17 (NKJV), we read, 'The LORD your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing.'*

*Music is vital to our ability to survive.*

*I received five varied entries, all well-written. Only three contestants referred to or responded to Charles Martin's statement. Some bibliographies were lacking.*

*It is important to list the requirements for the topic and cross them off as you include them in your writing. Correct spelling of song/hymn titles is paramount. Check a hymn book or look it up on the internet to make sure you spell and punctuate the words correctly and use upper or lower case properly. Every song/hymn chosen was very appropriate.*

*Clive McKegg wrote a very powerful and moving description of how one artist's songs helped him through a tough time. His title, Grace at Ground Zero, had me hooked from the start. I awarded him First Place*

*Great is Thy Faithfulness, a well-known favourite, was Jill Clarke's choice. The hymn is truly meaningful to her and her expression of how the words affected her are well-chosen. I awarded her Second Place.*

*Susan Flanagan's description of Jesus's love for us: 'Jesus paid it all...even his feet could love,' makes her interpretation of the topic requirements even more realistic. Her Third Placing is well-deserved.*

*When a statement is quoted, it is important to include it with your writing response.*

*Consistency is required when using upper or lower case in writing. If you have typed god in one sentence and God in another when both refer to the Creator, please check for any differences before submitting an entry. I was pleased to see all contestants used the specified format and were well-within the given word-count.*

## First Place



Clive  
McKegg  
of Whangarei

### Grace at Ground Zero

‘Music washes us from the inside out. It heals what nothing else can.’ (Charles Martin)

God seems to have a healing song for us at each season of life. Several years ago, I was passing through a dark time in my relationship with God and with my wife as God was exposing hidden sins and wounds. A friend introduced me to the album ‘Solo’ by Kiwi artist Derek Lind. Shockingly, Lind’s wife of 35 years died unexpectedly during the preparation of the album. Many of the songs were written in the aftermath – processing tragic loss, grief, and questioning of God. Consequently, the words and delivery are powerfully raw and confronting.

Listening to the album in my car often reduced me to vision-blurring tears. God used the pain of another to help me process my journey through the ‘valley of weeping’.<sup>1</sup> The song ‘Come to Me’ was especially cathartic.

*He said come to me, walk with me*

*Take my hand, I love you*

*I know right now everything*

*Is shadows, dark, and night*

*But my yoke is easy, and my burden is light*

*Walk with me, I love you*

I felt Jesus speaking to me directly. Through the song I comprehended at a deeper level what it means to ‘fall into grace’. When we have nothing to offer, nothing to commend ourselves to God, Jesus still invites us to come and be loved. Especially then. The writer questions Jesus’ invitation with the very human response:

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 84:6

*I said, how can it be that most  
Everything I love is lost to me  
Or stands alone untouchable?  
How can it be that love slips through my hand like dust  
Is swept away and washed far out to sea?*

There is no explanation, just a repetition of the invitation. As God was revealing the dark places in my soul, I didn't need theory or doctrine, but for Jesus to be with me in that mysterious fellowship of suffering that ultimately leads to springs of life. He feels our pain, knows our sin, and calls us anyway. This is grace at ground zero.

## Second Place



Jill  
Clarke  
of Wanganui

## Great is thy faithfulness

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Charles Martin (author) wrote "Music washes us from the inside out. It heals what nothing else can."

I identify with his written thoughts through the song **Great is thy faithfulness.**

My spirit lifts to give praise and thanks to our amazing god. As my father he will never turn away from his child. He is not indecisive or changeable. His word is sure, strong and unchanging with promises that bring healing, and compassion. This is the god I worship in our present changing world.

**Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father  
There is no shadow of turning with thee  
Thou changest not, thy compassions they fail not  
As thou hast been, thou forever will be.**

**Great is thy faithfulness  
Great is thy faithfulness  
Morning by morning new mercies I see  
All I have needed thy hand hath provided  
Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.**

Through the changing seasons my garden depicts the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. When I pull weeds, I am reminded of the clearing and cleaning Jesus does constantly in my life as he pardons my sin. In the darker experiences of life, I am assured of his peace and compassion. As dead seeds come to life and grow, I am filled with wonder and praise to our ever-present God.

**Summer and winter and springtime and harvest  
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above  
Join with all nature in manifold witness  
To thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.**

I know Jesus rose from the dead. Star gazing is limited by my vision. One day I will join heavenly galaxies dancing in praise to God. The “peace that passes understanding” is mine as I receive strength for each day and look forward in faith to all future blessings when I see Jesus, face to face.

**Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth  
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide  
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow  
Blessings all mine with ten thousand beside.**

Hallelujah!

Songwriters: Adam Anders, Thomas Chisholm, William Runyan.

## Third Place



Susan  
Flanagan  
of Northland

## Jesus Paid it All

'Music washes us from the inside out. It heals what nothing else can.'

I agree! Charles Martin's words resonate with me deeply. During my journey with Jesus, I have visited valleys and stood on summits. At all times music has sustained me, healed me, given me hope and a purpose.

Worship music infuses inner strength into me. It helps me re-focus on the creator of the universe, the author and finisher of my faith. There is power in the Word of God and I for one, find it easier at times to sing the Word, than read or pray the Word.

As a leader of worship in our small church, I love finding new songs to share with our congregation to help them draw near to God, and find whatever they need at the time, from the One who cares for us.

I was recently introduced to an old hymn written in 1865 named 'Jesus Paid It All'. The chorus is simple, but the truth contained in it is weighty.

'Jesus paid it all  
All to Him I owe  
Sin had left a crimson stain  
He washed it white as snow.'

When I first met Jesus, I was 31 and had lived a life far from God. Worship songs drew me close and the moment I surrendered my life to Him, I experienced the incredible lightness of a weight suddenly gone. Many old habits and ways of living were also gone. The healing I received was all at once; physical, emotional, and mindful.

'And when before the throne  
I stand in Him complete  
Jesus died my soul to save  
My lips shall still repeat

Jesus paid it all...'

I once heard an American preacher talk about dying in hospital and visiting heaven. He said love emanated from every pore of Jesus, even His feet oozed love. And the only possible response to arriving in front of our Lord and Saviour, was to fall at His feet, and repeat over and over; thank You, thank You, thank You.

## Level Three

### Judge: Julia Martin

**Requirement:** Write a story for children aged 8-12 years old about an event that had a deep impact on your life. Explain how and why and make sure your style and language are appropriate for this age group. (300 words)

### General Comments

*Writing successful stories for children is not always as easy as it may seem, especially in today's world with all the options available for their entertainment. In this assignment, writers are invited to share an incident or experience that has had a deep impact upon them, along with an explanation as to how and why this is so.*

*The event chosen had to be suitable for children aged 8 – 12 years who are the target audience in this case. The style and language used must also be appropriate for this specific age group.*

### Points to consider

1. *Choose a captivating title and opening sentence to arouse the interest of the children.*
2. *As many children are reluctant readers today, the story needs to be fast moving and exciting, with short sentences creating interest, suspense and even humour.*

3. *Decide how you will tell the story – in chronological order or with flash backs or flash forwards.*
4. *Tension and drama can build momentum and bring the story to life. The element of surprise can also be effective.*
5. *Because you are sharing your experience, the event will be told in the first person, from your point of view.*
6. *A good ending is essential. Possibly include a moral or takeaway message to leave a lasting impression on the reader, but keep it natural and subtle.*

*I received five good entries. Choosing the first and second place-getters was difficult as both entrants wrote entertaining and compelling stories about events that had an impact on their lives which they have obviously never forgotten. In each case the stories were suitable for the age group designated and the vocabulary and style were appropriate also.*

*I finally awarded first place to Pauline Marshall for her tragic mouse mystery which I'm sure this age group would relate to, and it had a strong moral as a takeaway. Second place went to Pat Kerr for her exciting, though bruising go-kart experience which would appeal to boys and girls. I awarded Janet Fleming third place. The other two entries were well-written but I felt they were more suitable for an older age group.*

## First Place



Pauline  
Marshall  
of  
Christchurch

## Murder Mystery

When I was twelve I bought two white mice, a male and a female, from a boy at school, and carried them home in a cardboard box. My cousin Neil built me a really cool two-story wooden mouse house for them.

I was excited to think that my mice might have babies, and sure enough the female's tummy started getting fatter. People told me that you should separate the male and female when they have babies because the male might eat them! That was hard to believe so I left them together. For company.

One morning I found six tiny pink lumps, cosily jumbled together like pieces of plasticine in the nest. They looked so helpless.

It was fun watching those parents care for their tiny babies. They were so gentle and loving. The father was proving all the experts wrong. I could see that he loved his babies because he was always licking them. He's fine, I told myself. He's a good dad!

Soon soft white fur covered their pink bodies and they began to explore. They looked so cute.

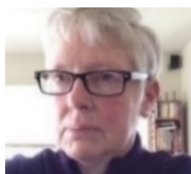
But one morning when I went to check on my little family, I got an awful shock. The nest was empty! Then I noticed, strewn all around the mouse house, little mounds of white fur! I counted six.

I was devastated. What had happened? Did the male lick them so much that he started eating them? Or did the female get mad because the male was taking over, so **she** ate them?

I didn't know. What I did know was that it was **my fault**. That was a really hard lesson for me. If you're breeding pet mice, separate the male from the female before she gives birth. It's the best way.

Always listen to those who know better!

## Second Place



Pat  
Kerr  
of Roxburgh

### Tomboy

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Piggy in the middle...I was the middle child, a girl, four years younger than my brother and three years older than my sister.

The big boys made go-karts from bits and pieces lying around. There was a wooden seat with a sack padding, sturdy pram wheels and some twine for steering, like horse reins.

The karts were tested on the concrete footpaths. Going downhill was great, but with no motor they had to be pushed up again. We called them "Rolls-can-Ardlies" for they could roll down the hills but could hardly (never) get up again without someone pushing. I was a pusher who yearned to have a ride.

The boys never said no. It was always 'next time' so I pushed. I wasn't thanked. They just smiled. They let a girl tag along.

One day we moved to a much steeper gravel track. It was so much more exciting...and much harder pushing. The boys were having fun. I was not.

Suddenly one of them relented. "Hop on" he said, smoothing the sack and putting the reins in my hand. Suddenly the bottom seemed miles away. It was so steep!

Before I could change my mind the boy gave the kart a mighty shove. I was off.

It was bumpy, very bumpy. There were no brakes. The sharp corner at the bottom of the hill was looming fast. To turn I had to haul on the rope reins. I had no strength. I was crying, screaming in terror. This was going to hurt.

Suddenly I was flying through the air with my hands outstretched. I didn't land on gravel or long grass but on a barbed-wire fence. Impaled, bleeding, humiliated.

The boys' laughter ceased. My brother was contrite.

"Sorry," I whispered.

This tomboy crept home to her books.

## Third Place



Janet  
Fleming  
of Kaao

## Stuck in the Mud!

Betsy was missing and Alicia would have to find her because her calf was due to be born. She searched in the drains just in case Betsy had fallen in, calling her name as she went.

Suddenly she stopped and listened. She could hear a soft mooing. She ran towards the swamp. There was Betsy with just her head and shoulders sticking out of the mud. Alicia stroked her cold wet face, then with tears in her eyes Alicia turned towards home.

As she ran, she thought about the bad things she did and how they held her down like the mud was holding Betsy.

Fifteen minutes later Alicia and her father were back at the swamp. Dad tied a rope to the tractor then secured the other end around Betsy's neck. As the tractor moved forwards the rope tightened and Betsy's neck stretched. Alicia was frightened. Betsy might choke and die. Suddenly Betsy began to move. She looked like a speed boat as she slid across the swamp.

On reaching the far side of the swamp Betsy staggered to her feet as Dad untied the rope around her neck.

Later after Alicia had washed Betsy down, she sat listening to Dad reading from the Bible. David talked about God hearing his cry and lifting him out of the muddy pit.

"Betsy couldn't help herself," Dad said. "She needed a power greater than the mud pulling her down. That's what Jesus can do for each one of us," Dad continued. "He can forgive us and wash us clean from our sin if we are sorry for the wrong things we have done."

After tea Alicia went to check Betsy. She was clean and dry now and snuggled alongside was her tiny newborn calf.

# Competitions for February 2023

Due by 1 January 2023

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

**Font:** Arial, 10 pt **Heading:** Bold Title Case, 18 pt **Line spacing:** Multiple 1.2

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

**Alignment:** Justified. **Send a photo** of yourself for publishing purposes.

**NB: If you are not sure which level you're on, email Debbie McDermott at: [level1@nzchristianwriters.org](mailto:level1@nzchristianwriters.org)**

Entries are judged on: Entering, format and layout 15%, Topic requirements 25%, Creativity, flow and impact 25%, Grammar and punctuation 25%, Spelling 10%.

## **Level One**—for members 16 years old and over

**Requirement:** Write a fictional short story that is full of suspense or the unexpected and has a strong Christian takeaway message. Use the following 10 words at least once in your tale: hoot, bush, beam, shadows, pants, creak, wind, hair, stand, swing. (500 words)



*Debbie*

**Email entry to Debbie McDermott at [level1@nzchristianwriters.org](mailto:level1@nzchristianwriters.org)**

## **Level Two**—for members 16 years old and over

**Requirement:** Apart from threatening our health, the Covid-19 pandemic has precipitated a global economic crisis that closed down many businesses and caused people to lose their jobs. Write a short devotion that will bring encouragement to your readers, especially those who have been affected by the pandemic. Begin with an anecdote. (300 words)



*Cindy*

**Email entry to Cindy David at [level2@nzchristianwriters.org](mailto:level2@nzchristianwriters.org)**

## **Level Three**—for members 16 years old and over

**Requirement:** Imagine you have a bucket list of things you would like to do or places you'd like to visit. Identify one and explain why it's on your list. (300 words maximum)



*Julia*

**Email entry to Julia Martin at [level3@nzchristianwriters.org](mailto:level3@nzchristianwriters.org)**



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