

JUNE - JULY 2023

THE CHRISTIAN writer

SEE INSIDE FOR

NZCW AGM Minutes 2023

Articles:

Retreat 2023 by Kathryn
Paul and Sandy Zimmer

Tips From an Editor by Janette Busch

My Christian Writers Retreat Experience
by Althea Barr

The Robe of Righteousness
by Keith Willis

Rough Draft Printed by Mary-Pat Ross

God's Provision by Shirley Jamieson

Poetry by:

Althea Barr

Beth Walker

Book Reviews:

Yesterday's Virgin... Tomorrow's Spouse
by Glenn Grant

Prayer by:

Lesley Edgeler

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

Editor and Membership Secretary: Kathryn Paul: editor@nzchristianwriters.org

For magazine contributions, address changes, membership queries.

Treasurer: For subscriptions, donations: treasurer@nzchristianwriters.org

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Book Review Requests: (current members only)

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

286 Karapiro Road, RD4, Cambridge 3496 or email: reviews@nzchristianwriters.org

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

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

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This issue printed locally by

BookPrint.
Making Bookshop Quality Easy

Contact David at
hello@bookprint.co.nz
09 443 1775
www.bookprint.co.nz

The Christian Writer

Jun – Jul 2023

ISSN 2537-8708 (Online)

VOL 40. No 3

ISSN 1171-0098 (Print)

Contents

Page 2	Contact Details – Editor Membership Secretary Book Review Requests
Page 4	President's Report – Justin St Vincent
Page 5	Editorial: Accommodation Testimony – Kathryn Paul
Page 6	Notices
Page 7	NZCW AGM Minutes 2023
Page 8	Retreat 2023 – Kathryn Paul and Sandy Zimmer
Page 17	Northland Christian Writers 'On the Spot' Writing Challenge
Page 20	Featherston Booktown Festival Experience – Kathryn Paul
Page 20	Introducing Angela Curtis
Page 21	My Christian Writers Retreat Experience – Althea Barr
Page 22	The Robe of Righteousness – Keith Willis
Page 23	Book Review: <i>Yesterday's Virgin...Tomorrow's Spouse</i> by Glenn Grant – reviewer Julia Martin
Page 23	Christian Writers Retreat Whitianga May 2023 – poem by Althea Barr
Page 24	That Crazy Christchurch Christian Group – Beth Walker
Page 26	Professional Writing Services – Free Advertising for Members
Page 28	Rough Draft Printed – Mary-Pat Ross
Page 29	God's Provision – Shirley Jamieson
Page 30	Find a Local Writers Group
Page 31	Welcome to New and Returning Members
Page 31	Tips From an Editor – Janette Busch
Page 32	Writing Competitions Mid-year Prize Winners and Promotions
Page 46	When the Thunder Belts – prayer by Lesley Edgeler

CW Competitions

Page 33	Level One Results	Page 41	Level Three Results
Page 38	Level Two Results	Page 47	Competitions for August 2023

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

President's Report

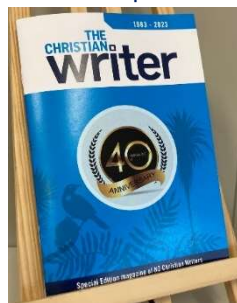


Firstly a MASSIVE THANK YOU to all the amazing writers who attended our Retreat 2023 to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of NZ Christian Writers. It was a remarkable time together with our inspiring seminar speakers: Anya McKee, Rosie Boom, Staci McLean and Stephen Whitwell. We greatly appreciate the amazing insights and wisdom you each shared from your publishing and writing journeys. As many reflected, it did feel like a spiritually significant time for all, plus we had so many *super fun times* that made the experience engaging and memorable.

On a personal note, it was a pleasure and privilege to MC and host our 52 attendees at our Retreat 2023. If you attended, I trust you've been reflecting on your favourite moments and have been able to begin the action points you noted for your own writing and publishing goals. If you'd like to attend our next Retreat, we will be sharing the relevant details with all our members. These are always shared in our magazine and on our website.



In this edition of *The Christian Writer*, you'll find highlights from our Retreat 2023, minutes from our AGM 2023, plus plenty of inspirational articles and published competition entries from our members. We also pay homage and tribute to a founding member, Beth Walker, who passed away on 30 April 2023, a particularly poignant time as many of us were concluding our 40th anniversary celebrations at our Retreat 2023. Beth will be dearly missed by many who knew her in our community of Christian writers. As our archivist and historian, she was a significant contributor to our 40th Anniversary Special Edition magazine. This magazine is freely available as a digital download to all our members.



Also during May 2023, *Powerful Punctuation*, a writing resource compiled by Jan Pendergrast and revised by Janette Busch and others, has been made freely available to all members. You are welcome to download the PDF eBook edition of this brilliant reference guide via our website. It's ideal for all beginner to experienced writers. Simply search 'Powerful Punctuation' at: www.nzchristianwriters.org.

Thanks again to Max Carr who provided the cover photograph for this edition.

Powerful Punctuation



Compiled by Jan Pendergrast

Kia Manaakitia – be blessed as you write for Him. Write on.

Justin St Vincent

Editorial: Accommodation Testimony

by Kathryn Paul



Recently I attended our NZCW Retreat in Whitianga, I've been attending my local Northland Christian Writers group in Whangarei and I made my first visit to the Featherston Booktown Festival near Wellington. This magazine issue features content about each of those events.

One of the things I enjoyed most at these events was meeting and connecting with some of you in person. It's wonderful how the love of Jesus Christ binds us together with an invisible bond as Christian brothers and sisters. I now have an opportunity to meet even more of you by inviting you to visit my place of accommodation. In past magazine issues I've shared how the Lord has answered my prayers in remarkable ways regarding accommodation. I have another testimony which I shared in person with the attendees at the Whitianga Retreat.

I had chosen to work for a kumara grower an hour's drive from my home so I could be closer to my elderly father. Then I asked the Lord, "If you want me to live closer to work, could you please give me Christian accommodation, grazing and beach access for my horses and a lake?" You can imagine this request appeared impossible to fulfil in a small rural area with few rentals available. However, one evening I was driving home from work and I reminded the Lord, "Last time when You helped me move I only had to make a couple of phone calls and everything fell into place. Is there some small step of faith I need to take in order for You to answer this prayer?"

Immediately I received an answer from the Holy Spirit in the form of a thought impression which He spoke into my mind: "*Take the next road on your left, Redhill Road.*" I genuinely didn't know the name of the next road and found the road sign did say Redhill Road. I obeyed the instruction and turned left. I drove through the countryside on a gravel road and said, "Okay, Holy Spirit, if this is You then you're going to show me something. I've no idea what it is."

Eventually I reached an old, tired-looking camp premises. I turned down the lane beside it expecting to enter a carpark but instead found myself on a beach access track. I parked part way down and climbed a bank to check it really was beach access. I could see the ocean and to my surprise I could also see a lake. You can imagine this had my attention! Long story short, it was confirmed the camp has grazing and the committee were happy to have a live-in caretaker and promoter to get it used more. It's fifteen minutes from my work and my father. Right now I'm sitting in the big kitchen of the Redhill Methodist Camp typing this editorial. Isn't God AMAZING and SO GOOD?

I have included an advertisement for the Redhill Camp in this magazine for anyone who would like a cheap, rugged retreat to hide away and write, or for groups who would like to stay. Be encouraged, God hears our prayers and He supports our writing for Him!

With love in Jesus,
from Kathryn

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

Notices

Local Writers Group Leaders Wanted

If you are willing to host a writers group in your area please get in touch. To find out more details email Justin at president@nzchristianwriters.org or Kathryn at 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 criterion 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 by the tenth of the month prior to the publication date.

South Island Christian Book Authors Network

Meetings are quarterly from 9:00am to 1:00pm at the Tenants Lounge, Maurice Carter Courts, 16 Dundee Place, Spreydon, Christchurch 8024. These are specifically offered for those interested in writing a book or who have published a book. For meeting dates contact facilitators Verna McFelin verna.mcfelin@gmail.com and Christine Nathan chris@teamnathan.co

Treasurer Vacancy – Join the NZCW Team!

NZCW treasurer role available on our Board from 1 July 2023. Those with experience using Xero and preparing financial reports are welcome to apply for this voluntary role. Is God calling you to help serve in this capacity as together we step into the next growth phase for NZ Christian Writers? Applications to our president, Justin St. Vincent: president@nzchristianwriters.org.

Author Seeking Funding

The End of Sacrifice by Ted Berg is a portrayal of the final days leading up to the second advent of Jesus Christ and what happens thereafter. It answers the questions:

- 1) Are we in for a nuclear war? (Wars and rumours of wars)
- 2) Will Covid-19 get any worse? (Pestilences)
- 3) What about extreme climate change?
- 4) Will our world economies ultimately implode?

In his book Berg has overlayed recorded history with Biblical prophecy and current affairs. He deals with the great tribulation, the Antichrist, the rapture, life after death, heaven and hell and the fate of the faithful. He is seeking funding to have his book published and distributed internationally. Contact Ted on 021 0270 3011 for more information.



AGM MINUTES 2023

NZ CHRISTIAN WRITERS | 40th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held at Flaxmill Retreat Centre, 1031 Purangi Road, RD 1, Whitianga 3591

On Sunday 30 April 2023, 9:05am - 9:20am

Chairperson: Kathryn Paul chaired, Justin St. Vincent took the minutes

Apologies: Janet Fleming, Caroline Cook, Julia Martin, and Janette Busch

Minutes: from AGM 2022 read by Kathryn Paul

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

Financial Report: received by Caroline Cook, read by Kathryn Paul

ASB Balance at 30/04/2023 \$8,127.05. 334 members at present.

Moved that the Financial Report be received

Motioned by: Kathryn Paul, seconded by: Stephen Whitwell

President's Report: read by Justin St. Vincent

Moved that the President's Report be received

Motioned by: Justin St. Vincent, seconded by: Vicki Millar

Board Update: All Board Members to be re-elected, noting new Treasurer can become available from 1 July 2023.

Election of Board Members:

President: Justin St. Vincent

Nominated by: Kathryn Paul, seconded by: Iola Goulton

Vice President: Janet Fleming

Nominated by: Justin St. Vincent, seconded by: Rosie Boom

Treasurer: Caroline Cook (until 30/06/2023)

Nominated by: Kathryn Paul, seconded by: Kay Peterson

Magazine Editor & Membership Secretary: Kathryn Paul

Nominated by: Justin St. Vincent, seconded by: Rosie Boom

Book Reviewer & Level 3 Competition Judge: Julia Martin

Nominated by: Kathryn Paul, seconded by: Debbie Bennett

South Island Representative: Janette Busch

Nominated by: Kay Peterson, seconded by: Jennifer Somervell

Board members to stand as above.

Close: AGM closed with prayer at 9:20am

Retreat 2023, Flaxmill Retreat Centre, Whitianga

Report by Kathryn Paul and Sandy Zimmer

Once again, the NZCW Writers Retreat delivered great workshops and wonderful food and fellowship. One of the memorable highlights was when our top-notch caterer revealed her hidden talent for singing during talent night!

Day #1: Thursday

The Retreat Programme began with a warm welcome from our NZCW president and Retreat MC, Justin St. Vincent. After a lovely evening meal in the dining hall the board game competitions began. Later, popcorn was served for the movie *Saving Mr Banks*.



Flaxmill Accommodation

Day #2: Friday

Each morning a delicious breakfast was available from 8am and the programme started at 9am when Kathryn Paul brought a brief devotional focusing on the scripture, *Buy truth and do not sell it; Get wisdom and instruction and understanding.* (Proverbs 23:23.)

Our first workshop session began with Anya McKee from Tom Curtain Publishing.

The Power of Excellence – Anya McKee

We are not here to be a perfectionist, we're here to be excellent.

- Excellence is faithfulness. From Him, through Him and for Him. Romans 11:36
- Reading a pleasure.
- Don't let the words get in the way of the message.
- Rather than say I have written a 'book' say "I have written a manuscript".
- It is courageous to hand in a manuscript.

Before you start writing:

- Brain storm with the Holy Spirit.
- Have an analogue and digital desk.
- Start with structure.
- Not family and friends to read the manuscript but someone qualified.
- Trust your gut!
- Don't over-think anything.
- Don't make human-sense; trust God.
- Work away from the computer, then come back.

What makes a good book?

- Educates – stimulating intellectually.
- Has to be true – researched – fact.
- Entertains – make it enjoyable, bring warmth – make it easy and relaxing.
- Evokes a response or informs, intrigues, inspires.
- Be vulnerable.

Goals for every Author:

- Readers get to know you.
- Bring tone of warmth and endearment.
- Storyteller or teacher, choose your vehicle.

Excellence in Design – Decisions

- Trim Size Styles.
- Colour Margins.
- Font choice. Back blurb.
- Running heads. Page numbers.
- Barcode In print.
- Illustrations. Table of content.



What is Excellence in Publishing?

- Retaining author's voice.
- Staying aligned with the Holy Spirit.
- Ensuring industry standards.
- Crossing the finishing line together, writer and publisher.

After morning tea, Anya provided a second helpful session on The Power of Collaboration.

The Power of Collaboration – Anya McKee

It can be lonely and isolated as a writer. Some of the issues or feelings a writer might have to work through are: self-doubt, procrastination, fear, process, panic, discouragement, inadequacy, ill equipped, tiredness, inner blockages, emotional hurts or wounds, unsureness.

- Excitement – stop to celebrate the win.
- Who is the real me as I bare my soul to the page?
- Can take communion daily.
- 12,000 words is a booklet not a book.
- Don't let a writing inability stop you.
- Shake off comparison – competition – awareness of others – shackles come off – don't be legalistic.
- Join arms with others – consistency – freedom in your writing – online writing groups – coaches – mentors – NZ Society of Authors etc.

- Part of something bigger.
- Work with collaborator team – Beta reader takes manuscript before publication.

Books open doors for people. We have access to another realm with Jesus, with nothing to stop all Heaven's resources. In His presence I get to write. The atmosphere is sorted in the heavens; there's no loneliness; the Holy Spirit is with us. There's no place for self-doubt in Christ, Author and Perfecter and no lack of inspiration. With Jesus, there are ANGELS in our midst, collaborating with Heaven.

What is your ultimate writing goal?

- Be student and teacher – learn – read books on writing – do a writing course – go to conferences. Look up: Kahn Academy, Pixar in a Box, The Art of Storytelling, by John Walsh, Save the Cat - by Blake Synder.
- The words '*Once upon a time*' – can connect on an emotional level.
- "Seek and ye shall find" – searching intentionally Eccl 12: 9,10 Just start – Eccl 11:4.
- No matter what age you are, "I'll put that in my book!"
- Find inspiration – a writers great quest is discovering what they can write about.

Your great asset is yourself!

- Write down three things about yourself.
- Write down three things that you are passionate about.
- Write down three things you have experience in.
- Fresh and original – be yourself or be nobody – a competitive advantage.
- Find your own voice – readers will recognise you – you are qualified to tell your story.
- Write five words that describe your writing best.
- How do you see your writing?
- Find the time to learn. Find the skills you need.
- Seek as treasure the importance of your own character development.
- Sacrifice – stop watching television etc
- Show don't tell.
- Study – commitment.
- Regular writing time.
- Don't get obsessed with it.
- Learn your craft. Find the time to read.
- Finish – "For night comes when no man can work". Find the finishing line.
- Giving birth to a book.

"I can plod, I can persevere any given pursuant. To this I owe everything" William Cavey.

TORN CURTAIN PUBLISHING:

Anya McKee: anya@torncurtainpublishing.com

After free time and then lunch together our second speaker of the day was author, Rosie Boom. Here is some of what Rosie shared with us.

Developing the Art of Storytelling and Building Great Characters – Rosie Boom

“Success is God’s approval.”

Galatians 6:9 – “And don’t allow yourselves to be weary or disheartened in planting good seeds, for the season of reaping the wonderful harvest you’ve planted is coming!”

- Making our readers care and feel for our characters.
- Hero’s journey being heart and soul.
- Writing a hero who transforms and who comes out a different person is the secret source.
- Leonard Bishop – *Art of War* for writers.
- Start with character, end with character, find a story in between.
- What is going to happen next?
- *The Wire*, David Simon.
- What is a satisfying character arc?
- Transforming of the inner journey of a character.
- What lesson have they learned by the end of the story?



Five Elements of Plot Line

Exposition – Rising action – Climax – Falling action – Resolution.

Six Important Questions

Who is it about?

- Appearance – voice – personality – interests and hobbies – relationships – strengths – quirks – blind spots.
- What’s the back story? (Tough background.)
- A character interview – maintain character’s integrity.
- Don’t violate your characters.
- Internal characteristics rather than outer.
- Use strange words.
- Characters can have a sense of humour – little sayings, like Scrooge’s ‘Bah Humbug’.
- What trauma have they been through and survived?

What do they want?

- It's external and your reader knows and understands.
- What is one thing they want?
- What will it mean if they get it?
- Be as specific as you can.
- Actively pursue what he/she wants and if they overcome the obstacles they encounter.

BUT, your character also has a NEED! It's internal and not as obvious to the reader. This is the essence of the life lesson, the inner journey the spiritual lesson of the story.

- WANT – what they think will make them happy.
- NEED – to achieve true happiness.

The battle between want and need will create a never-ending supply of conflict and tension.

Conflict creates a great overall arc and avoids a boring and static character.

When can't they get it?

- What is preventing them from getting it?
- What obstacles are standing in the way?
- Conflict challenges, tensions, story arc.

What do they do about that?

- How does the character respond to the challenges?
- Good choice or bad choice?

Why doesn't it work?

- Antagonist – circumstances – betrayal – failure – danger – misunderstandings.
- Make it genuine.

How does it end?

- How will the plot force the character to confront their flaws?
- Character to choose between getting what they want and getting what they need.
- Apply your heart to it.

So fellow storytellers let's keep growing and keep learning! Do courses online. Read, read, read – out of and in different books. Think, think, think – analyse and observe. Watch, watch, watch. Listen, listen, listen. Get amongst people, be in the stream of life. Write, write, write.

The rest of Friday afternoon's Retreat programme was free time. After another great evening meal some elected to play board games and watch the movie *I Still Believe*, accompanied with a supply of tasty popcorn.



Day #3: Saturday

Saturday morning again began with a devotional from Kathryn focusing on Proverbs 23:23 and she shared a testimony of God's provision for her to be caretaker at Redhill Camp in Northland. See Kathryn's editorial in this issue for that testimony.

Saturday's first speaker was Staci McLean. It was great to have Staci back to deliver another inspiring session.

Write On: Eliminating Excuses – Staci McLean

Eliminating Excuses

- Change thinking – mind shift – take emotion out of it – logical solution.
- Excuses are a default – Change words around excuses, can't, too old, too sore.
- Change the way you approach excuses.
- Think positive – do positive – prepare for trial and error.
- If it is God's will there is a way.
- An excuse is NOT a barrier, but an invitation to step out in faith and find a solution.
- We have a Creative God!
- Not impossible to change.
- Your reason can become an excuse – part through the excuse.
- The people who need to hear your words are missing out!
- Time is a limited resource, most valuable resource – Masters of our time – manage time.
- Prioritise our time – create more free time – use a time budget – use a planner.
- Are you time wasting?
- Sacrifice time – create more time – when you are on deadline you will work it – create momentum.
- Don't let money be an excuse – God is not limited.
- Put your money where your faith is!
- Excuse – self-belief – self-confidence – don't know where to start?
- Step by step – fear of failure – perfectionism – enemy stopping you!
- When God calls you, there is always a way – YOU CAN DO IT!
- Find a mentor or coach – get training support – make lots of mistakes – practice not perfection!
- When you can't, God can – He is with us – TAKE ACTION TODAY!
- Change your language to positive – only two options, make progress or make excuses!



After morning tea, Staci provided a second helpful session on Writing with Purpose.

Writing with Purpose – Staci McLean

Christian writing is so much more!

- Not hidden in a cupboard – be out in the open – release it out into the World to multiply.
- A book is not a product, but the Purpose – God will move around the book and touch people's hearts.
- Focus on the ministry, not the book – ministry can grow out of writing with purpose!
- If you are passionate about something write a manuscript. Someone has to do it; it's YOU!

Writing that has Purpose

- Serves people – builds community – points to Jesus – educates them.
- Does it open ideas for the reader? Does it open a door for them?
- Builds connection with readers to Jesus.
- More impact and reach from writing – testimony about authors – book readings and launches – workshops speaking – social media – online – blogs – articles – websites – social enterprises – charities.
- Why do you write?
- What is important to you?
- Check out Inflow.co.nz
- God wants us to think BIGGER – Eph 3.20
- HOPE & CONNECTION for people.
- Purpose and ministry – let it grow bigger with God.
- Don't hold on to it – let God – let it fly – use your gifts and talents.

After free time and a scrumptious lunch together our second speaker of the day was Stephen Whitwell.

The Writer's Identity – Stephen Whitwell

- Sons and daughters of God purposely positioned.
- God is my Father.
- Identify: the distinguishing character or personality of an individual.
- Who is God? God is God – origin – purpose – God is good.



- Belief determines behaviour – you can't get closer to God until you have a concept of Him.
- Surrender all to God – rest in the Lord in His grace.
- Self is always the problem, surrender is the answer – God is Great!
- Identity comes before activity/action.
- Who am I?
- You are who God tells you you are and nobody else.
- Perspective – How do you see yourself? What you do simply proves what you do.
- Position – we sit with Christ at God's feet.
- Romans 6&7 – we sin because we are sinners – receiving Christ takes our sins away – in union with Him.
- It's not our condition that determines our Position, it is our Position that determines our Condition!
- Power John 8.32 – True confession sets you free.
- Completeness in our Position will result in wholeness in our Condition.
- Whatever we give attention to we give strength to.
- What do I know? Know these things – what you know is where you go – knowledge comes from God. Proverbs 2:6, 2:9. Freedom comes from knowing the TRUTH.
- Grow in these things – READ – MEDITATE – STUDY – Revelation leads to reality.
- Focus on what you have, writing – GRACE growth follows.

Go in these things – writing will go to a whole new level when you know your identity in Christ!

The Writer's Life – Stephen Whitwell

Living an identity driven life – you have seen your identity, now it is time to shape your activity.

Conquering identity Blockers

- Circumstances can change how you see your identity.
- Physical can change how you see your identity.
- Addictions can change how you see your identity.

You are not your body (I'm outstanding!).

Allow God to baptise you in the affirmation of your true identity.



What do you think are some of the identity blockers in your life?

Physical condition – pain – people's opinions of me – children's actions – sense of failure – what you haven't achieved – not good enough – self perception – false modesty – media – busyness.

How has your identity been confirmed to you, or how would you like it to be confirmed to you?

- "...in who I am well pleased."
- You are pre-approved by God.
- Communion before commission.
- Don't let the devil steal your identity.
- In the security of the Father – Son/Daughter of God – I am a child of God – being held in Jesus's arms.
- Ceremony of confirmation.
- Know who you are within.

What habits will you establish in your life that come from your identity as a writer?

- The goal is not to write a book, the goal is to become a writer!
- Relationship with God – Surrender.
- Have a plan – make a schedule – time block.
- Find time to write.
- Keep a notebook.
- Start saying "I am a writer".
- Eliminate distractions.
- Write everyday.
- Read more.
- Priorities and balance.
- Quick to forgive.
- Go to your specific place.
- Find clarity.
- Show up.
- Finish something.
- Do the work.
- Start Small.
- Reward yourself.

Following Stephen's impacting workshop, the rest of the afternoon was free to spend as people wished. This included exploring Flaxmill Bay and taking the ferry ride across to Whitianga.

In the evening was our Talent Show which was so good we could have charged ticket prices! There were many entries including poetry, music, singing and acting. Thank you to those who participated.

Our evening ended with popcorn and the movie, *I Can Only Imagine*.



Day #4—Sunday

After breakfast on the last day of our retreat Kathryn brought her third devotion which she concluded with the words, 'Once we have obtained truth we can communicate God's truth to others using our writing. Whether writing fiction or non-fiction we can have His truth entwined – subtle or obvious. I believe God is so excited when we do this! He is behind your Christian writing projects. He is for you. He is your biggest cheerleader and supporter. As you leave the Retreat today, I encourage you to take the truths that have come to you this weekend and go forward with confidence. He wants you to write for Him with His truth.'

After that our AGM took place. Then we joined together for a church service with worship led by Rosie Boom, and with Stephen Whitwell bringing a great message.

After the church service the Retreat concluded with an early lunch that enabled travellers to get away early.

A big thanks to Justin St. Vincent, Flaxmill Retreat Centre, Jennifer Darling Catering, Big Toe Foundation and all who helped make this excellent Retreat a memorable experience. We're looking forward to the next one!



Northland Christian Writers 'On-the-Spot' Writing Challenge

by Kathryn Paul

Northland Christian Writers meet monthly in Whangarei. At our recent May meeting I challenged attendees with an 'on the spot' writing exercise. We had five minutes to pick a country, city or town and write about it as if it were a person. The example we were following was from Lamentations chapter one which was written about the city of Jerusalem as if it was a person.

How solitary and lonely sits the city [Jerusalem] that was [once] full of people! How like a widow she has become. She who was great among the nations! The princess among the provinces, has become a forced labourer! She weeps bitterly in the night and her tears are [constantly] on her cheeks; among all her lovers (political allies) she has no one to comfort her. All her friends have dealt treacherously with her; they have become her enemies. Lamentations 1:1-2. (Amplified Bible).

I was so impressed with how everybody did in this exercise that I asked their permission to publish what they wrote. Remember these were handwritten at the meeting table immediately after I asked for it and completed within five minutes.

Te Aroha

by Karl Van de Water

You live alone at the very end of the Kaimai ranges. Your's is the highest peak. You seem to embody your name. I enjoy being there. I feel safe, happy and.... loved?

The lovely scenic roads that lead to you seem to draw me in. I can't wait to get there, to see you again. Your comforting hot springs and mineral baths are a joy to experience.

The City of Edinburgh

by Jayne King

Edinburgh you stand majestic and strongly assured of the history you represent through your years of existence. The stories you reveal as one gets to know you with every step taken through your ancient streets that echo a good and bad past. You have warmly welcomed many and I hold a special place for you in my heart.

Haumoana

by Greame Tearle

Wind and sea breeze. You brought me into this world, providing shelter, sustenance and growth.

Your breaking waves and sea breezes rocked me to sleep for 20 years. You bid me farewell to a new life. Memories of Haumoana, sea, surf, fishing, and geology.

Puketapu

by Maureen Tearle

O Puketapu, how I am grieving for you, village of my childhood, those middle years. Those tough and challenging growing up years.

Now you have been devastated, flooded, turned over until you are unrecognisable. Never did I expect to see you on the news, such shocking news, Cyclone Gabrielle.

Yet as a community you have pulled together and become united towards recovery. Connection once again, with healing.

Haumoana

by Maureen Tearle

Haumoana, village by the sea, stony foreshore, estuary and outlet. My love for the sea came through you in my formative years, my awe of the forces of nature. That flooded our streets in the one in a hundred year flood, that turned our street into a river.

I lost my first pets as a young child, I learnt to grieve. You witnessed my first love, you sheltered my spouse to be for 20 years, though we never met there. We married in the little village church, we led the youth in lots of fun.

Sometimes I am sad that we never stayed, but we moved on. The village family grieved at our leaving. We moved far away, never to return again to settle on your welcoming foreshore.

Kelila

by Mary Davie-Martin

O Kelila, my thoughts often return to you, and I recall the amazing challenges, difficulties, or very positive times that we faced together during our 15 years of close relationship.

I recall the deep changes and benefits that occurred in both of us as we learnt more about each other's languages, culture, and deep beliefs.

I still feel the deep loss of our separation.

Kaipara Flats

by Gwenyth Frear

You now sit silent and passers-by have no idea of what your life once was. There was the bustling general store which was the hub of the area, now just a deserted ruin. You also had a bakery and a butcher to supply bountifully to your residents...alas, those days are just a memory now. The once bustling railway station is totally deserted with grass growing up around the railway lines, with silence prevailing over all.

New Zealand

by Clive McKegg

New Zealand, you've lost your way. When you were young, you were hopeful, innocent, and joyful. Now you are weary, worn and lost. You have forgotten the joy of childhood. You have pursued what the other nations have told you that you must have. But these things have corrupted you. You have become just like them. You started well. You desired to treat all people as valuable and equal. There is hope. Return to your trust in Jesus.

Glinks Gully

by Kathryn Paul

Glinks Gully village sits nestled below the cliffs and she enjoys the west coast ocean floor at her doorstep. Her joy and laughter is expressed through the various flowers along the dunes and gardens. She sighs in contentment as the roaring, wild waves promise food and life. She smiles upon the fun of holidaymakers and visitors in four-wheel-drives.

Christchurch

by Mavis Glynnr

The stoic old lady dressed in splendor of brick and stone. Her sisters in Britain would have been proud of her. Then her wonder was destroyed. She cried as parts of her fell amongst ruins and vast caverns caused by an earthquake.

A new woman began to emerge, still a teenager, making a statement. Look at me I am new, made of glass and wood. I will withstand any shakes. Side by side they stand, elderly with the teenager, still amongst them ruins and remnants with basements.

Featherston Booktown Festival Experience 13-14 May 2023

by Kathryn Paul

Recently I drove from Northland to Featherston near Wellington to attend my first Featherston Booktown Festival. The drive down was beautifully scenic. I was blessed to stay with one of our members who kindly offered me hospitality in her warm and cosy home right there in Featherston.



At the Festival our NZCW stall was in a good location near the stage with good visibility. I enjoyed exploring the other stalls, town and local bookstores. Our stall made some good sales and provided a talking point introducing people to NZ Christian Writers.

Word travelled fast among the Booktown visitors that there was a Christian Bookshop at the event and this drew people to our stall. One person expressed disappointment that there were so few adult Christian books available at our stall. I suspect some people were expecting a larger selection such as what Manna store can offer. I was able to give out our NZCW business card and let people know there are a lot more books available on our website. I also attended two sessions of interest to me while I was there, at one of which prolific NZ writer Joy Cowley was a speaker.

I'm glad I went to the festival and if we choose to participate again next year, I will have more confidence in answering people's questions about the event and encouraging people to supply their books for it. I'd like to say a big thank you to all who visited the stall, helped at the tables and who came along to say 'hello'.

ANGELA CURTIS is a best-selling author and is passionate about helping writers publish their books, and earn a passive income so they can live the life of their dreams. She has been writing/publishing since 2008. Her books include NZ historical non-fiction, true interactive adventures with soundscapes and videos, and a series written on the miraculous move of God on an orphanage in India where the children have been having visions of Heaven like the book *Visions Beyond the Veil* by H A Baker. In her spare time Angela likes to play her saxophone, learn other languages, and donate her time to Christian non-profits. She was Director of Mercy Ships NZ for seven years, so her expertise lies in business. But with her unusual CV which clearly reveals she has been ticking off her bucket list, she has a wide range of skills and humorous experiences she incorporates in her online Masterclasses and books that keep people up reading until the early hours of the morning.

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My Christian Writers Retreat Experience

by Althea Barr

The Writers Retreat at Flaxmill Bay in the Coromandel was wonderful and inspiring. Jill and I drove down to Maungaturoto where we met up with Karl and Sandy, and Kathryn who drove us via the scenic route to Coromandel Town and across to Whitianga and from there to Flaxmill Bay. We stayed in shared house accommodation, five of us in ours; Lola was one of the leaders, the other four of us, Jill, Kay, Valmai and I, soon became firm friends and with Sandy often shared a table at mealtimes. On the last day, with Karl, we took the ferry across to explore Whitianga. Besides the delicious meals provided by an amazing and talented cook, we enjoyed the talks, and boy, did we learn a lot!

Anya McKee, who runs Torn Curtain Publishing, talked of the **Power of Excellence**. 'Don't let the words get in the way of the message,' she said. 'Brainstorm with the Holy Spirit before you start. And don't overthink. A good book educates, entertains, and evokes a response. Have goals.'

In her second talk, she spoke of the **Power of Collaboration**. As many of you will know, writing can be a lonely and isolating experience. As she said, 'It helps to join with others' and she shared the lovely thought that 'what we craft on earth gets read in heaven'.

Rosie Boom, who with her twin led us beautifully in worship on the last day, spoke of **Storytelling** and how stories connect with us on an emotional level, making us laugh or cry. She quoted an Aboriginal saying: 'The important stories are seeking the right person to tell them.' Her advice is:

1. Start
2. Develop your own voice. Every publisher is looking for something unique.
3. Set up a regular writing time and don't be obsessed with perfection.
4. Find the skills you need and learn how to improve.
5. Finish! 'God's approval is better than overnight success.'

In her second talk she spoke about **Building Great Characters** your reader will care about, maintaining the integrity of the character, taking your protagonist on a journey to pursue a goal, to overcome obstacles, to deal with failure or betrayal, or danger...your choice! Also develop the antagonist and give your story a satisfactory ending.

Next day, Stacey McLean spoke on **Eliminating Excuses**. Don't we all do it? She told us how to overcome excuses, reasons that are genuine and obstacles, and to find solutions. She spoke on the importance of managing our time well and gave us a helpful Time Plan sheet. She gave us ways to prioritise our time and although publishing can cost, ways to find help if we need it. 'The important thing is to have self-confidence. It can be done. Don't fear failure; it's good to fail. Find a mentor or a coach. When you can't, God can. He has a plan. Do it!'

Second talk, she taught us to **Write with Purpose**. 'Our talents are useless unless out in the world. People need hope and they need to be pointed to Jesus (Eph 3.20). Our testimony is important, wherever we are: book clubs, workshops, at home. God wants us to think bigger.'

Stephen Whitwell was the last speaker. He used humour and a wonderful way with words and alliteration to give us his talk on **The Writer's Identity**. He started with 'Who is God? His Goodness is God's Identity'. Then, 'Who am I? Who God says I am. Your current behaviour mirrors whom you are.' (Sobering thought!) Our position is united with Christ. 'It is not our condition that determines our position, it's our position that determines our condition.' (See what I mean about his words?) This truth gives us power. 'Don't despise knowledge,' he said, 'it leads to revelation and ultimately to reality. You can't grow if you don't know. God accepts us as we are, so we should focus on what we already have, not on what we don't.'

His second talk was on the **Identity Driven life**. Releasing the song in the soul.

1. Conquer identity blockers.
2. Confirmation of identity. God made this clear to Jesus in the Jordan. Moses and Jeremiah both needed to know it. Allow God to confirm yours.
3. Get close to Jesus, He has the best ideas. 'Your activity for Christ does not give you your identity, you are not what your hands do, you are what your heart is.'
4. Tell people what you are doing.
5. Finish something!

The evening finished with a Talent Show, with poetry, prose and music. Lots of talent, lots of fun! It was a good weekend. Thank you, Kathryn, Justin and everyone involved. And thank You, Lord!

The Robe of Righteousness

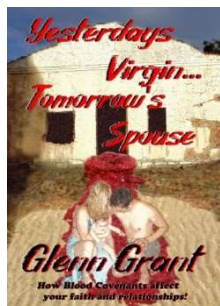
by Keith Willis

If you have ever spent time on a sheep farm in the spring you will have noted that death is unfortunately not uncommon. Most ewes give birth without much trouble but occasionally there are complications and, despite the best efforts of the farmer, the ewe or her lamb may die. This is not only sad but it also causes a problem. Actually one of two problems. A ewe with plenty of milk but no lamb to drink it or a lamb with no mother to feed it.

If the farmer is unfortunate enough to have both problems on the same day he may be able to solve both by uniting the bereaved mother with the orphaned baby. However, sheep are not as stupid as they are reputed to be. The ewe will take one sniff at the lamb and reject it because she knows it's not her own. The farmer has a trick to overcome this rejection. He removes the skin from the dead lamb and ties it around the orphaned lamb. It is now acceptable to the ewe because it looks and smells right.

Jesus, as you know, lived a sinless life. You could say that he wore a robe of righteousness, never removing it until that terrible Friday, at Golgotha. On the cross he flung it off and assumed all the sin of the world.

He offers us his robe of righteousness. If we accept it and wear it we, like the orphaned lamb, become acceptable. Instead of being rejected because of our sinfulness, we become acceptable to God and adopted by Him as one of His family. Furthermore, by wearing that robe of righteousness we gradually grow to be more like its original owner.



Yesterday's Virgin... Tomorrow's Spouse

How Blood Covenants Affect Your Faith and Relationships

By Glenn Grant

Review by Julia Martin

Published by Glenn Grant Writing 2006 & 2021

From his vast experience overseas as a counsellor, evangelist and church planter, Glenn has written this book using God's word as his source to help discover answers to the tragic problems and unspeakable suffering experienced by people in broken relationships.

He starts by explaining the importance God places on covenants – oaths that seal a relationship between God and man and are always in the best interests of men and women. He further develops this theme by exploring the physical and spiritual covenants that sexual activity brings about.

In a no holds barred account, Glenn covers all aspects of human sexuality, even those areas seldom discussed. All his statements are grounded in scripture. While society's standards and morals have changed over time, God's word never changes and Glenn claims we disobey or ignore its teachings at our peril.

As an ex-occultist and satanist before becoming a Christian in 1978, Glenn understands the powers of darkness and how Satan and his demons operate to spoil our lives. Glenn's writing is non-judgemental but he speaks God's truth in love so readers can achieve morally and spiritually vibrant lives.

At the end of each chapter, his wife Susan includes a series of challenging questions for the reader to evaluate, followed by prayer.

This book is well-researched and comprehensively presented and I strongly recommend it as a Christian manual for counsellors, church leaders, struggling couples, and parents who want the best for their young people.

Christian Writer's Retreat, Whitianga, May 2023

by Althea Barr

What did I go to find?

Companionship, certainly,
and I found it.

Inspiration, yes, that too,
and guidance.

And in the place I used to know so well,
where with my family
I'd spent so many summers,
memories surfaced,
past mingled with the present.

So what did I take away?

A warmth

in knowing that I'm not alone,
friendships
birthed in shared experience,
that will continue,
a knowledge
of how to rectify shortcomings,
the worth of writing,
and that it is my duty
to share the gift God gave me.

Thank you

To everyone who made this possible,
and to my Lord
who guided me to come,
and brought us safely home.

That Crazy Christchurch Christian Group

by Beth Walker, December 2014

At Christchurch CFFD we are quite brave.
There's Tanya and Vanya and Vida and Dave,
and Dave P our leader who sometimes can rave,
and Mel – when she laughs all her arms and legs wave.

Dave truly is quite small, Dave P is right tall.
There's Nigel and Colin and Clynton (not Bill).
And Liz, Jeff and Thelsia patiently will
do great piles of dishes while we eat our fill.

Jeff wore a weird gadget all round his crook leg –
he'd look like an ET if worn round his head.
Marie has a big heart and legs that will swell.
Now Wendy's away Paula comes to help Mel.

Ian B brings the name tags arranged on a shelf,
all neat and in order. He made it himself.
'cos Ian's an inventor. Now Rose comes to sign
to help Tanya hear, and they manage just fine.

There's Michael and Andrew and Phillip G-Hunt,
young-looking mum Brenda with lively son Brent
and Janice and Helen, Denise, Doug and Kevin.
We sure will have fun when we run round in heaven.

Rowena and Robin have come for a while.
To get here some have to come many a mile.
Our Helen and Andrew both have a cute smile –
wow, CFFD, we do like your beaut style.

There's Lois and Dean, both so helpful and keen,
and Alf (not a wee elf) whose wisdom is seen.
Oh, Kevin F got the computer to go
when it played up so badly then went madly slow.

Hey, Philip and Christine can both really sing,
and David-the-Psalmist* can play a twelve-string.
Young Nigel's another who sings with some flair,
while Allan and Margaret are usually there.

There's Gary and Heather, so happy together,
and Liz posts out cards, whatever the weather.
Wherever our Brian is jokes fly around –
though he's in a wheelchair his tongue isn't bound.

Now some of us think he's incredibly brave,
'cause Brian did fly into Auckland with Dave.*
They did stop to drop off Beth's bag to her mate,
and reached Di's big birthday bash sadly quite late.**

Bruce C sorts the transport to meetings and home,
to make sure we get there and no-one will roam.
Lorraine was known sometimes to wander alone,
but Vanya stayed with her so no harm was done.

Christine hosts the prayer chain, with Philip of course.
Dave P does the bookkeeping, watches the purse.
He also tells jokes, *some* of which could be worse,
though if he continues he would need a hearse.

We have sausage sizzles and mystery trips
and mid-winter dinners – not mid-winter dips.
There's concerts, camps, speakers, a luncheon or two,
in case you are wondering just what we do.

Some have big legs, short legs, or eyes that will shirk.
Or minds quite forgetful, bent backs that won't work.
There's crutches, sticks, walkers and wheelchairs galore,
and catheters, raised-up shoes, and all sorts more.

So as you can tell we're a motley old bunch
who sometimes will gather together for lunch.
Whoops! Looks like I'll have to rewrite this whole verse,
or people will think we're all weirdos – or worse.

But as you can tell we're a wonderful bunch,
for Jesus is with us – that's more than a hunch.
And sometimes we do get together for lunch.
Come join us as we all say grace, start to munch.

* refers to Dave P

** Di Willis' 70th birthday party

Sadly, Beth Walker passed away in April 2023. This poem shares her joy of writing.

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ASTUTE EDITING

Candice Hume

E: 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.

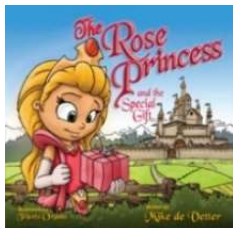
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My name is Iola Goulton and I run Christian Editing Services.

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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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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Rough Draft Printed!

How I got this far in the book writing process.

By Mary-Pat Ross

Holding the rough copy of my first non-fiction book was a momentous event and one that has taken some time to achieve. When I first recorded the content 13 years ago in a 2010 notebook, one goal was to write a book to encourage people to seek God and discover their purpose. Writing a book was a vague vision held quietly in my heart for a number of years. It wasn't until after a three-year mission experience in Africa that this God-given idea came into my memory again.



Then two years ago, a friend and published author invited me to a picnic as an introduction to the NZCW group. Now the reality of writing this book came closer as I found a supportive network of Christian writers. I took another step in realising this dream by attending the 2021 NZCW retreat. It was such an encouraging yet overwhelming source of inspirational and practical advice. Setting goals and associating with writers became a new priority. One nugget of insight I heard at the retreat was to call myself a 'writer'. This did not occur instantly but was profound.

Then a breakthrough came while thinking about 'how to eat an elephant!' Books presented at the retreat that caught my eye were missions' stories. It was then I thought, *why not just start by writing only about the three-year Mozambique experience?* It was well documented, journalled, and photographed. Tackling the bigger book about my life's journey in finding peace in Christ went on the 'back burner'.

For the next few months, I was starting the book but never getting past the beginning. As I was sharing this difficulty with Geraldine, a published author, she came to my rescue by asking me questions which led to some suggested chapter headings from a chronological review of events. She helped me by scaffolding the first six chapters. The next piece of invaluable advice she gave me was to write without stopping. In other words, refrain from editing any of it until the story is told.

These two simple yet invaluable tools helped me progress with 'eating this elephant...one bite (or chapter) at a time!' I then set a very small goal to devote three hours a week to writing. Keeping a notebook of dates, times and number of words helped with self-accountability. I discovered within a short time that I could easily achieve six hours a week in writing this book, continuing to add more chapters.

After one year, this progress inspired me to set a new goal: print the rough copy by the 2023 retreat! Two days before packing to go, it was done. However, the hospital rang with a sudden opening for a long-awaited surgery. As I recover from disappointment and surgery, I see there's time for self-editing my rough copy before the next step. And remind myself that I am a writer!

Mary-Pat Ross, writer.

God's Provision

by Shirley Jamieson

On earth, we need **light**, a suitable **atmosphere**, **food**, **water**, **warmth** and **gravity** for us to live. These six things also portray our spiritual needs that God provides for us.

How do they do that? First, think about **light**. In Psalm 119:105 it says, 'Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.' And Jesus said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life' John 8:12. Staying close to Jesus and doing what God teaches us in the Bible will shine truth into our lives so we can follow it.

Our earth's **atmosphere** protects us from a lot of the harmful ultraviolet rays from the sun, and most space junk is burned up before it hits us. Wind helps to even out temperatures and distributes rain around the globe.

So, what does this show us? Psalm 28:7 tells us, 'The LORD is my strength and shield, my heart trusts in him and I am helped.' God protects us from evil. He knows about all the difficulties we face and is always there to strengthen us.

But what about **wind** and **rain**? Deuteronomy 32:2 says, 'Let my teaching fall like rain and my words descend like dew, like showers on new grass, like abundant rain on tender plants.'

Wind often represents God's Spirit in the Bible. For example, Acts 2 tells us about Pentecost when the sound of wind heralded the Holy Spirit. At creation God breathed on Adam to give him life.

What does the Bible say about our spiritual **food** and **water**? John 6:35 tells us, 'Then Jesus declared: I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.' In John 1:14 it explains that Jesus is the Word of God. To nourish our spiritual wellbeing, we need to take it in every day. Isaiah wrote, 'With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation' Isaiah 12:3.

It is important to keep **warm**. God has placed the earth at the right distance from the sun, so the whole planet doesn't burn up or freeze solid.

We need the warmth of his love. In Psalm 36:7 it says, 'How priceless is your unfailing love! Both high and low among men find refuge in the shadow of your wings.' There is comfort in God's love.

We've looked at light, atmosphere, food, water and warmth, but what could the Bible possibly tell us about gravity? We trust gravity to keep us from floating away. If we trust God, he does that spiritually too. Jude 24-25 assures us, 'To him who is able to keep us from falling and present us before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy – to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord before all ages, now and forever more!'

Our God is amazing, isn't he!

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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

Tips From an Editor

How to Check your Final Document

by Janette Busch

While we know how important it is to check our work before sending it to an editor, not all of us know much about this very important task.

Here is the first of two articles about this: the first, in this magazine, covers *how* to check your document and the second (in the next magazine), will cover *what* to check.

NB: You CANNOT edit your own work – yes, even I have sent this article to others to check for me.

It is essential that the final check you make of your document is on the printed copy. Research has shown that when editing on the computer your eyes can deceive you so you overlook errors.

Suggestions of how to do your check:

- Leave some time before you check the text for mistakes. Overnight would be a minimum but the longer the better.
- Check that the language (see last article) is set to NZ English, then use a spell checker as a first screening, but don't believe everything it says!

- Read it slowly, really slowly – check by pointing your finger to one word at a time. You can use a blank piece of paper to cover the lines not checked. If you do this you will be less likely to skip from one error to the next obvious error, while missing subtle errors in between.
- Check the body of the text first and then check any headings, footnotes and pull quotes, etc.
- Read it out loud to yourself. Doing this is really good at revealing any awkward phrases and stops you reading what you think is there, not what is there.
- Read each page backwards to focus on the spelling of the words. Start at the last sentence and read it and then the previous sentences in turn.
- Hold the page upside down to focus on the layout.
- Give a copy of the document to another person. Keep a copy yourself and then take turns reading it out loud to each other. While one of you reads the other one reads along to catch any errors and awkward sounding phrases.
- If you do this check before sending your file to a copy editor or proof reader, you will be sure to save money when paying your copy editor/proof reader.

Writing Competitions Points Board

Level One		Level Two		Level Three	
Rachel Larkin	36	Taylor Foster	39	Clive McKegg	27
Shelley Frost	21	Fiona Murray	24	Jean Crane	24
Chantel Strooh	18	Jill Clarke	24	Lois Farrow	24
		Felicity Logan	21	Ruth Jamieson	15
		Sue Shelton	21		

Congratulations to our mid-year prize winners! The following members are now promoted to their next level: Rachel Larkin, Taylor Foster, Jill Clarke, Sue Shelton. Promoted to the Honours List are Ruth Jamieson and Jean Crane.

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 Dec 2023 – Jan 2024 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: You have reunited with a friend you haven't seen for a very long time, so you have lots to say to each other. Recreate the scene with plenty of dialogue between you both. (350 words)

General Comments

I was pleased to receive 10 good entries and congratulate entrants for giving the competition a go. I especially want to commend those who found the topic unappealing or challenging, but entered anyway. You all made an excellent effort.

*The main requirement of this assignment was having **lots to say** to a friend you hadn't seen for a very long time; i.e. there had to be **plenty of dialogue** between you both. Plenty and lots means I was expecting at least 70%-75% of the content of entries to be in dialogue. Only two entrants achieved and actually exceeded this percentage, while the other eight ranged from being just below 70% to as low as 32.8%. The lower the percentage, the more marks they lost for not meeting this requirement as well as they should have.*

I finally awarded first place to Julie Collins for her excellent dialogue which comprised 78.2% of total content. Second place went to Rachel Larkin for her excellent writing and the compassion displayed throughout her piece. Third Place Equal went to Imelda Cruz Wood for the well-written, meaningful conversation she had with her friend, and to Shelley Frost for her beautiful portrayal of her reconnection with Jesus.

I would like to point out here that dialogue is considered to be one of the most important literary devices a writer can use to make their characters and what is happening in the narrative real to their audience. It is therefore important to hone our skills in this area. Through dialogue, we can:

- *Get characters to reveal themselves and their personalities when they express their thoughts, emotions and opinions out loud.*
- *Build an atmosphere such as suspense, excitement, fear etc by giving little hints that make the reader wonder, guess and grow concerned.*
- *Intensify conflict through disagreement, wheedling, demands etc.*
- *Give background information and advance the plot.*

First Place



Julie
Collins
of Whakatane

WhatsApp

I was thrilled to discover Mandy was on WhatsApp. We met at school and over the last 5 decades we have exchanged news via handwritten letters and greeting cards. When email and Facebook were invented, we communicated using these platforms too. Now we were excited to be talking for free, using our phones.

"Hello Mandy, it is lovely seeing you." I said as my friend's face appeared on my telephone screen.

"Likewise," Mandy retorted. "What time is it there?"

"We are currently 13 hours ahead. So, 9pm same day. Come our winter and your summer, we will be 11 hours ahead."

"How does that work?" Mandy enquired.

"In New Zealand, we put our clocks back an hour as you put yours forward for British Summer time. This closes our gap by two hours."

"Thank you for sending me an electronic copy of your Creation Magazine." Mandy said. "I really enjoyed looking at it."

"I wasn't sure whether it would be of interest to you. I had permission to forward my electronic version to three people."

"I am glad you chose me." She enthused.

"I've always known you were a Christian, but as a teacher, I wasn't sure if you were a creationist or evolutionist."

"Definitely creation, which makes it awkward to teach evolution theory."

I replied, "I work with science teachers as their laboratory technician and seem to trigger an anger response whenever I ask what they do when a student does not believe in evolution. often I get "Evolution has been proven by Science!" I know some Christians believe in evolution, and I did once upon a time. What is important is Jesus being central to our belief. However, I just wish schools would provide a balanced approach. Evolution is still only a theory and I think it does more harm than good as it promotes atheist thinking and for believers, there was no fall."

"Yes, I agree and if anything, science points more to creation rather than evolution."

"Oh darn!" I respond, "Our internet connection is rubbish. Can I ring you in 15 minutes to continue our discussion?"

Second Place



Rachel
Larkin
of Auckland

The Surprising News

“Kathy? Is that you?”

Kathy smiled despite the tears stinging her eyes. “It’s me,” she replied, her voice cracking.

She limped towards me awkwardly, her face grimacing in pain as we came together in a hug. My carry-on bag fell to the floor.

“How long has it been?” Kathy asked.

“Too long,” I replied, my voice thick with emotion.

Kathy smiled. “What a surprise! I can’t believe this. What are you doing here? I thought you lived in Auckland.”

I sighed and ran my hand through my listless, greying hair. “I had to attend a very boring training course in Wellington, but I am just about to board my plane to go back home.”

Kathy nodded, her eyes twinkling. “I have something to tell you,” she said, glancing excitedly around the airport. “I’m getting married... again!”

My jaw dropped, and my body froze as I struggled to process her words. “Married?” I stuttered, my voice barely audible. “You’re getting married again? To who? Who is he?”

Kathy nodded, a wide smile spreading across her face. “His name is James. We met on Tinder and we’re getting married next month!”

I shook my head in disbelief. “Wow, that’s amazing! How long have you known him?”

Kathy beamed. “Well, maybe about a month. But it’s long enough. I am pretty certain that we are right for each other.”

I tried to smile, but all I was seeing were red flags. Should I caution her or leave it? I haven’t exactly been there for her over the years.

“Last boarding call for Flight 446, Wellington to Auckland. Please make your way to Gate 13.”

I sighed. “That’s me. I have to go.”

Kathy nodded and hugged me again. “I have so much to tell you. Let’s swap phone numbers.”

I smiled, squeezing my old friend tightly. “Yes, I’ll call you once I am back home.”

As I settled into seat 21A and stared out the window, I said a little prayer for Kathy. “Father God, keep my friend safe. Help me reconnect with her again and give me the wisdom to know what to say and how to say it. Amen.”

Third Place Equal



Imelda
Cruz Wood
of Wairarapa

After Ten Years

After an hour of contemplation inside the adoration chapel, I stepped down and felt astonished at the sight of a familiar face I saw going out of the church door. It was Lou, my childhood friend. I couldn't help my excitement. I increased my stride to catch up and greet her.

“Oh my God, what a coincidence! We're here at the same time!” she exclaimed and hugged me tight. “When did we last see each other?”

“Ten years, ago in this same church!” I screamed. “That was your wedding day, after which, your groom brought you to a remote place and we lost communication. Through all those years, I didn't know what's happening to you. There were hearsays about your married life that I couldn't believe. Tell me, what really happened to you?”

She heaved a deep sigh before replying. “Believe it or not, I'm now a single mother to two kids.”

I held her hand and dragged her out of the churchyard. “I heard about that but was just a hearsay. Let's go to a café and tell me more.”

Waiting for our orders, I nudged her to continue answering my queries.

“Well, before I start, prepare your handkerchief, girl,” she replied with a smile.

“I'm ready!”

She held my hand and stated, “Truth is, our church wedding was null and void from the beginning.”

“What? How did that happen?” I cried out loud.

“I filed for legal separation when I could no longer endure living with a violent drunkard and womanizer. That's how I discovered that he was a liar from the start because based on church records, he had a previous marriage, so I was not legally married to him.”

Hearing her words caused a lump in my throat.

“Don't cry for me, friend. I feel better and happier now because God freed me from that bondage. I have a long story to tell, so I'll keep in touch. For now, I must go home because the kids are waiting.”

“Okay, we'll do more catching up later. Just tell me when and I'll be willing to listen.”

Third Place Equal



Shelley
Frost
of Pegasus

Together Again

I burst outside, my heart fluttering in my ribcage like a bird trying to fly free. It was so long since I'd seen him and I'd never seen him like this before. He seemed to fill the sky, larger than life while his smile was infectious. How could he be happy to see me? I expected something more judgmental. A frown between the eyes at least. A reminder I hadn't answered his calls for years.

"I'm sorry." My apology was little more than a breath, whipped away by the wind. "Why are you so pleased to see me?"

You're worth seeing.

"Seems unlikely."

His loving smile never faltered. *You doubt me?*

I flushed, suddenly awkward. "Of course not. Not anymore."

You know me then?

"Jesus," I whispered and that truth struck me silent. Until the first scattered drops of rain hit my eyes to smear the sky above and wipe away the face it held. I gasped, struggling with loss. "Are you still there?"

Always. His voice was warmer than sunshine on an outstretched hand.

"I'm sorry. For everything."

I know. I forgive you.

I closed my eyes but the joy was too great to hold in and tears curved across my cheeks. *I found you.*

Yes, He agreed. *Do you always seek answers?*

"A-huh." That was easy. "I hate lies."

You found the truth instead, He said. *So, do you know everything now?*

I smiled at that. "Of course not." My eyes flew open. "I've got so much to learn."

Silence. My pulse was the only thing I could hear, leaping in sudden panic. "Are you there? Lord? Please don't go." I was babbling like a child but couldn't stop. "Hello? Please be there."

Always, Jesus promised more quietly.

My heartbeat stopped rattling in my ears. "You sound fainter and I can't see you anymore. How will I find you again?"

Look for me in a smile. Feel me in your heart. Call to me in prayer and find me in the Bible.

I ran inside to curl up with a Good Book and continue our conversation.

Level Two

Judge: Cindy David

Requirement: Imagine finishing a non-fiction 'How-to' book in your chosen genre. Write a blurb that you intend to appear on the back cover of your book to convince readers to buy it. (200 words)

General Comments

A blurb is a brief summary of a book that appears on its back cover or inside flap. It's a vital marketing tool that serves several key purposes: attracting readers, communicating the book's value, and compelling them to buy it.

As an author, I find writing blurbs to be the most challenging part of the book-writing process. The main reason for this is that it's not easy to condense an entire book, which is usually made up of thousands of words, into a few short sentences.

I was thrilled to receive three entries for this competition, and all of them were noteworthy and well-written. After careful consideration, I awarded first place to Taylor Foster for her entry. She started with a strong opening sentence that captures the reader's attention and provides a clear idea of what the book is about. She also highlighted the solution in a few words, giving readers a clear and compelling reason to buy the book.

Sue and Felicity tied for second place. Both entries have engaging opening lines. Sue started with a powerful question, which is an effective way to capture the reader's interest, while Felicity illustrated a situation that is relatable to most people.

It's important for entrants to note that a blurb should include a strong call to action, as this is what will encourage readers to pick up the book and make a purchase.

Overall, each of the entries had its own strengths, and I appreciate the effort that all participants put into their submissions.

First Place



Taylor
Foster
of Tauranga

How To Let the Light In

It's time to come out of hiding.

It's time to let go of the guilt and shame.

It's time to step into healing.

It's time to *let the light in*.

We've all made mistakes. Some big, some small. Our sins have built up in hiding until the weight of guilt is almost suffocating. We desperately want to begin again. We want to let go of the shackles we're dragging.

It all starts with Jesus.

His love and forgiveness are being extended to you. He wants to free you from the shame and guilt you are carrying. He does not condemn you but wants to help you step into the light with Him.

This book will help you on that journey. You will learn about Jesus' love for you and discover God's transformative healing. Chapter-by-chapter guidance alongside my personal story of redemption will help you work through your pain and step into God's light.

The journey will be painful at times but you will never find such freedom and healing as in Jesus' arms.

Our pasts no longer need to tether us.

We don't need to be afraid.

Jesus is ready. God is willing.

Let's take a step and let His light in.

Second Place Equal



Sue
Shelton
of Hastings

Housework Can Be Fun! By Dusty Nomore

Do you find that your resolution to keep a clean and tidy house is constantly failing? Recent studies have shown that living in a dirty, messy house may have a profoundly negative impact on your peace of mind. This may range from irritability and sleeplessness through to depression and anxiety. It turns out that getting your house in order can literally prolong your life!

In her inspirational new book *Dusty Nomore*, mother of 5 and regular contributor to *Spectacular Homemaker's Journal*, outlines a detailed plan on how to move from chaos to order and cleanliness.

Her book is full of practical advice and tips. The first part will teach you how to:

- Run a working bee
- Provide adequate cleaning materials
- Dispose of rubbish in environmentally friendly ways
- Bake muffins to keep helpers happy
- Select music to maximise productivity
- Keep helpers motivated until order is achieved

Having attained a measure of cleanliness and tidiness, the second part of the book teaches you how to maintain it. The tips and tricks for making weekly tasks pleasurable, enjoyable and exciting are extensive.

If you wish to create a life-prolonging home environment without it being a chore, then House-work Can Be Fun will not disappoint.

Second Place Equal



Felicity
Logan
of Feilding

Book Blurb

It's happened!

Grandma gifts Ted her piano; school offers Eric group guitar lessons; Allie is attracted to brass bands... and star-struck Susie wants to sing onstage.

What can the family do? How to assess options-versus-costs in terms of time, money, maintenance and transport? Decision time!

FAMILY MAESTRO: a handbook has practical suggestions for helping your child master the international language of Music:

- recognising motivations and aptitude
- finding a physiologically suitable instrument
- choosing learning programs (recommended private tutor, group, community?) and online resources
- juggling necessary practice, homework and other after-school activities
- determining goals and challenges, short- and long-term
- recognising progress and owning it

- weighing the pros and cons of exams, or feasible options
- weathering any learning plateau or technique frustration

It also tells how the author and others were catapulted into situations serving the community and were surprised how well they managed!

1.

Author Felicity Logan is an ex-primary school teacher who brought up a family while teaching piano, was dance accompanist for several decades, presented student for exams, played other instruments, trained to tutor children who are “other-enabled”...

... and who agrees with Nietzsche: **“Without Music, life would be a mistake.”**

Level Three

Judge: Julia Martin

Requirement: : ‘For evil to flourish, it only takes good men and women to do nothing.’ Using this statement as a title, write an opinion piece from a Christian point of view for a secular newspaper. (400 words maximum)

General Comments

In recent times it seems to be getting harder to express opinions from a Christian standpoint and have them aired in the secular media. As the Lord calls us to be salt and light in this dark world, it's a challenge we should try to meet whenever and wherever possible.

This does require considerable skill and expertise however, and must be done with ‘gentleness and respect’ (1 Peter 3:16). There is no place for rude or discourteous arguments or comments.

There seems to be ample tolerance for various liberal ideas and philosophies today, but very little shown towards the conservative or Christian point of view.

As Christian writers we may have to be creative such as using social media where there are widespread opportunities to speak up and spread our influence far and wide.

Points to consider:

- *Choose an attention-grabbing title and opening statement to draw the reader into your article.*
- *Identify your target audience. In this assignment the target readership is secular, so keep language clear and simple, avoiding Christian jargon and unfamiliar biblical doctrines and teaching.*

- Ask questions that are direct, challenging, and thought-provoking.
- Use personal experiences if suitable.
- Quote from scripture or other sources where relevant, and always include references at the end of the article.
- Research carefully and thoroughly. Mistakes affect credibility.
- Structure the article with ideas and statements in logical order.
- Complete the article with a hard-hitting statement or question that will continue to challenge the reader.
- Time allocation. As someone has recommended:
Pray 10% of your time. Research 40%. Write article 30%. Review 10%. Pray 10%.
Finally press the SEND button and leave the outcome to the Lord.

I received five excellent entries and they all dealt with the topic in different ways. First place goes to Clive McKegg for a well-researched and scholarly article. Second place goes to Lois Farrow and third place is awarded to Jean Crane. The standard of writing and expression was excellent. My thanks also to the other two entrants who weren't far behind in points.

First Place



Clive
McKegg
of Whangarei

Standing Well

For evil to flourish, it only takes good men and women to do nothing.

The following whakatauki echoes the sentiment expressed above: *Tama tū tama ora; tama noho tama mate*. This translates as *'He who stands lives; he who sits, perishes.'* Both statements are a call out of passivity into courage.

The problems of our age are enormous, and in the face of these issues there are two possible responses – to sit and do nothing or to stand. Passivity is easy. Most people would rather just distract themselves and pretend that everything is fine. In his 1985 book *'Amusing Ourselves to Death'* Neil Postman said *'Orwell feared those who would deprive us of information. Huxley feared those who would give us so much that we would be reduced to passivity and egoism.'* (1) Postman correctly predicted that Huxley would be right. Our society has largely been overwhelmed into passivity by too many choices and too much information.

However, there are those who choose to stand. They see the problems and decide that they will do something. This also has two possible outcomes. The easy answer is to embrace an attractive ideology and to become an activist for that issue. Ideologies presume that simple answers can solve complex questions. They often assume a Darwinian struggle for survival against a hostile race, class or religion. Marx framed his philosophy around 'class struggle' between the proletariat and the capitalist. Hitler's manifesto was named '*Mein Kampf*' or '*My Struggle*.' Hitler identified an enemy – primarily the Jew – and framed his answer around overcoming this enemy out of which utopia would result.

Oversimplified versions of reality like these all ultimately lead to violence. Today we have an abundance of competing ideologies that reduce complex problems to clichéd click-bait, tweets and memes. Class, race, and beliefs are still pitted against one-another – often identifying one kind of person as the root of all evil: the nationalist, the progressive, the conservative, the elite technocrat, the climate-change denier, the greenie, or the straight white male.

What is the second option? Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn wrote "*The line between good and evil runs not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either — but right through every human heart.*" (2) We must recover not just our courage to stand but humility and wisdom about how to stand – fully aware that we are all fallible, flawed humans who need divine grace to solve complex issues.

(1) Neil Postman. *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. 20th anniversary ed, Penguin Books, 2006.

(2) Aleksandr Isaevich Solzhenitsyn. *The Gulag Archipelago, 1918-1956: An Experiment in Literary Investigation*. 1st ed., Harper & Row, 1974.

Second Place



Lois
Farrow
of Rangiora

For Evil to Flourish

For Evil to Flourish, it Only Takes Good Men and Women to do Nothing.

This saying sounds wonderful. As good folks who do not want to see evil flourish, we will DO something. We will speak up against evil, work tirelessly for good, and evil will disappear!

Well, it is not quite that simple. Powerful influences behind the evil in our world will take supernatural power greater than ours to destroy it. But we need to do what we can and not stay silent when we see evil around us.

But how do we define evil? Who decides? Whose standards do we trust? Perhaps we could look to the ten commandments, which give universal standards which have stood the test of time.ⁱ

Speaking out is dangerous. A man named John living in the time of Jesus got his head chopped off for challenging the king about adultery." Whistle-blowers who have the courage to speak out against corruption are hounded mercilessly. Recently we saw politician, Chloe Swarbrick, vilified for speaking out about the harm alcohol causes in society, and wanting to bring change. Dare we speak out against lobbying of the Government by the alcohol and tobacco industries?

These days speaking out against anything is classed as hate speech. What happened to free speech, and the right to speak out against what is wrong in society? Can we find a way to challenge evil without being accused of hating individuals?

Speaking up against evil takes courage and commitment, and has no guarantee of success. When William Wilberforce campaigned in the British parliament against slavery, he met violent and vicious opposition. Ultimately, he was successful, but change takes time, and may not come in your lifetime.

Sometimes we are silent because of ignorance, being unaware or ill-informed about the issue. Perhaps we are afraid of being ridiculed and mocked. Rulers seem to have all the power; they can cruelly punish those who speak against their actions. Perhaps we feel that our contribution is too small to make a difference.

Well-known author C.S. Lewis writes *Good and evil both increase at compound interest. That is why the little decisions you and I make every day are of such infinite importance.*"

We need to develop our character and that of our children so we make good decisions, and speak up for what is good and helpful in our society. You never know what influence it may have, which might even compound into positive change in our communities.

Bibliography:

ⁱ Holy Bible: Exodus 20

" Holy Bible Mark 6:14-29

" C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*.

Third Place



Jean
Crane
of Tauranga

For Evil to Flourish

For evil to flourish, it only takes good men and woman to do nothing.

I believe the time has come to speak out against a sinister plot that is threatening New Zealand society.

*"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."
Edmund Burke.*

In my opinion, Critical Race Theory (CRT), developed by *Richard Delgado* and *Jean Stefancic* in 1989, is extremely abhorrent and definitely needs exposing. Although it examines racism within culture and society and expounds the importance of equity, it also teaches that people with white skin are racist because they are born thoroughly evil. As I see it, this is clearly racism and cancels out any idea of impartiality.

CRT, I understand, is a theory where white people are made to feel guilty about their skin colour and resentful about their heritage. They are demonised as evil oppressors of the past and made to feel they must keep apologising for the injustices of their white ancestors. It is clear the sole purpose of CRT is to turn people against their own history, traditions, families and fellow citizens, by woke cancel culture, Marxist practices.

I believe CRT sees itself as a new religion, demanding every white person admit they are racist because of their skin colour. As far as I am concerned, we all descended from our ancient father Adam, who was neither white nor black, but middle brown. According to *Harrub* and *Thompson*, human beings have only two colour pigments in their genes. These are dark brown and reddish brown. This proves that there is no such thing as white skin. We are in fact, all different shades of brown.

It appears to me, the main aim of CRT is to divide the world into white racist oppressors and coloured victims. The disturbing reality is that this dangerous, immoral, anti-white theory is now being taught throughout our Education system. Personally, I believe it is a serious violation of our Human Rights and it is time to expose CRT for what it really is.

In conclusion, everyone has value regardless of their skin colour. There is only one race, the human race, and no distinction should be made between people based on the colour of their skin. We are all worthy of respect and should reject outright, this harmful, racist theory that so blatantly teaches discrimination. Ignoring injustice is extremely harmful.

References:

- ¹ Burke E. (1770). *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents*.
- ² Delgado R. and Stefancic J. (2001). *Critical Race Theory*.
- ³ Harrub B. and Thompson B. (2003). *The Truth About Human Origins*.

When the Thunder Belts

Prayer by Lesley Edgeler

Heavenly Father, You, who are worthy to be praised,
Your glory in the heavens is both spectacular and amazing.

Who else could keep the skies from falling like a titanic ceiling crashing down upon the earth?

Who else could calm the stormy feelings we tangle with, clutching at strands of an emotional spider's web, trying to break free so we can look to You in wonder and awe?
When the thunder belts out across the sky and the lightning flashes, no man can imitate
Your wondrous power.

Even the astrologists can be baffled at times as they look through giant telescopes, ever
searching the universe for other signs of life.

Yet, you have hidden the answers from us. Is it possible that somewhere in outer space
other lives exist? A sinless race? Are we the only ones who suffer the consequences of
the fall?

Amazing grace has come down to free us of guilt and condemnation. In our suffering You
are there beside us, waiting to be summoned through our heart-rending cries; our longing
for Your comfort and understanding when we can no longer understand ourselves.

You see right through us. We are your most intricate creation, the crown of your
imagination, yet we have let You down. You lift us out of the doldrums and put new joy in
our hearts.

Our thanks are incomplete—not sublime enough to touch Your power and glory. Our
thankfulness is lacking as we try to express our joy, our relief, our gratitude to an awesome
God.

A God who sent His one and only Son so we could be forgiven, have eternal life and the
promise of being with You forever.

We thank You and praise You,
In the mighty name of our Lord Jesus Christ,
To whom be glory and honour forevermore.

Amen

Competitions for August 2023

Due by 1 July 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

Entries are judged on: Entering, format and layout 15%, Topic requirements 25%, Creativity, flow and impact 25%, Grammar and punctuation 25%, Spelling 10%. Stipulated wordcounts have a 5% leeway under or above the required amount. A maximum wordcount has a 5% leeway under the amount.

Level One—for members 16 years old and over

Requirement: Writing in the first person, put yourself into the shoes of a lesser known Bible character and tell the story of an event that happened in their life. Ensure you remain true to the facts while using your imagination to fill in the unknown. (500 words maximum)



Debbie

Email entry to Debbie McDermott at level1@nzchristianwriters.org

Level Two—for members 16 years old and over

Requirement: Chiasms are an integral concept in the Book of Psalms. Study the structure of Psalm 46 and explain (200 words including the Bible translation). Now write your own Psalm incorporating the chiasmic structure. (Maximum 12 lines)

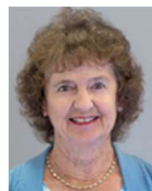


Lesley

Email entry to Lesley Edgeler at level2@nzchristianwriters.org

Level Three—for members 16 years old and over

Requirement: From the Bible, choose a young person (named or unnamed) who witnessed a miracle. Allow him or her to tell their story in a format suitable for readers aged 8 to 12 years. (250 words)



Julia

Email entry to Julia Martin at level3@nzchristianwriters.org



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

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