

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER 2023

THE CHRISTIAN Writer



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How to Calculate Tax on Your Book Sales
by Andrew Stirling

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by Lauren Lee Byrne Allan

Poetry by:

I Need You More Than Ever
by Rodney Hickman

Again and Again by Althea Barr

Local Writers Groups,
Writing Competitions and much 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 and membership queries.

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

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1) Digital magazine: Full membership \$40/Student membership (up to 25 yr) \$20

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

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

Book Review Requests: (current members only)

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

286 Karapiro Road, RD 4, 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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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



We're excited to be sharing with our members the brand new *Competition Topics Reference Sheet 2024*. This is a preview of our competition topics and criteria for 2024. With special thanks to our Competitions Coordinator, Debbie McDermott, plus our Competition Judges for 2024, Lesley Edgeler, Shirley Jamieson and Julia Martin. Our print-issue subscribers receive this as a printed insert, and all members, including our digital members, can access the *Competition Topics Reference Sheet* on our website: www.nzchristianwriters.org/competitions/.

Here at NZ Christian Writers our vision is to encourage and inspire Christian writers throughout New Zealand. Our writing competitions are a creative way in which we encourage and inspire our members. By participating in our various competitions, members have the chance to improve their writing craft and win cash prizes in the form of a Manna Christian Stores voucher. Our writers have commented that entering our competitions has helped boost their confidence in writing for a range of assignments. In addition, they receive helpful critique and support from our competition judges.

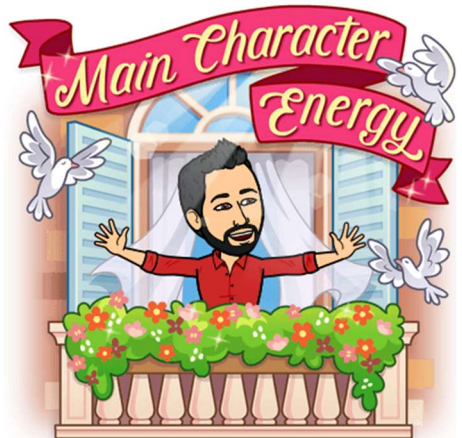
Another way NZ Christian Writers encourages and inspires our members is through our Local Groups. Just recently, I saw a fun meme on Facebook that said: 'A group of writers is called a procrastination'. That gave me a hearty chuckle! I'm happy to report that we have many writer groups who have been thriving throughout 2023. Our prayer is that they'll continue to go from strength to strength throughout 2024 and beyond. If you're looking for an encouraging and inspiring environment to help support your gift of writing, let me encourage you to check out our various writing groups here: www.nzchristianwriters.org/groups/.

We're also thrilled to be featuring more photography from Max Carr, who has shared another brilliant photo for this front cover of our Oct-Nov 2023 *The Christian Writer* magazine. If you know of other writers in your church or community, perhaps introduce them to our website for NZ Christian Writers. As always, we welcome both beginner and experienced writers to join us: www.nzchristianwriters.org/join/.

Be blessed as we all step into the new Spring season together.

Kia Manaakitia – be blessed,

Justin St Vincent



Editorial: Make an Impact

by Kathryn Paul



I recently read a poem by member, Rodney Hickman, and the following words stood out to me; *But people only see Me through the deeds and words you say, So I need you more than ever...*

For the past year I've been experiencing feelings of burnout and sometimes the question would pop up from me to the Lord, 'Why am I still here?' Often I relate to the scriptures from 2 Corinthians 5 where the apostle Paul says, '...while we are in this tent (our body) we groan...' I have a creative imagination and occasionally have pictured and wished for a convenient exit door straight from this planet into Heaven. When life isn't easy, I'm feeling the groan!

My life over the years has taken many turns that I didn't want it to (plot twist!) and I'm grateful the Lord has been my constant Rock through it all. So when I was again groaning and asking the Lord – 'Can't I come Home to You now? Haven't I already done enough? Everything is all a bit too hard, a bit too much for me' – and the words of Rodney's poem landed in my inbox; they ministered to me, bringing comfort.



Our deeds and words have a lasting impact. They can reach beyond our own lifetime. They are like flowers planted in a garden that another will see and appreciate. Here at Redhill Camp I've been so grateful to discover the various flowers popping up that others before me have planted. One of my favourite flowers are freesias and some of those have randomly popped up in the lawn.

Our efforts in the garden of life can be used by the Lord to have a vital life-and-death impact. He still needs me to stay in the race and keep going. He needs me to keep using my life to draw the attention of others to Him and His existence. He needs you too.



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 details contact facilitators: Verna McFelin verna.mcfelin@gmail.com and Christine Nathan chris@teamnathan.co

Volunteers Wanted for NZCW Projects

Are you available to help serve NZ Christian Writers? We need to enlarge our pool of volunteers. Find out more about available roles and tasks: contact Kathryn at editor@nzchristianwriters.org.

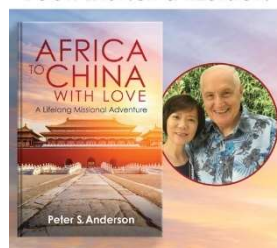
Warning! Scammer Alert!

Please remember no one from NZ Christian Writers is authorised to email members asking for money or other forms of help. Check for fake email addresses as the scammers like to pretend to be one of us. Do not reply to the scammer emails; simply ignore them.

Book Launch “Africa to China with Love: A Lifelong Missional Adventure” by Peter S Anderson

Peter and Elizabeth Anderson invite you to join them for a cup of tea as they share testimony and introduce Peter's new book. Profits from book sales to go to Family First, Langham Preaching and Our Daily Bread Ministries. SATURDAY 25 NOVEMBER 2023 2.00pm to 4.00pm Gracecity Church, 17 Marewa Road, Greenlane, Auckland.

BOOK LAUNCH & REUNION





Raising Godly Mothers

by Shing Stirling

I remember holding my first baby, trying to console her. The room was dark and lifeless. I was experiencing an emotional breakdown and fighting exhaustion while trying to relieve baby from her distress. That first year consisted of many long days and cold nights. Another sibling was now on the way. Would I survive having two? I had done what the experts told me but my joy was absent. Something needed to change.

The True Experts

I read many books and blogs as well as watched YouTube videos. Feeling defeated by the "terrible twos" and seeing friends with the same fate, I finally realised the true experts were the real mothers themselves. The ones who have gone before.

The Bible rightly instructs "the older women ... [to] admonish the young women" (Titus 2:3-4).

I began to seek out the older women. How do I get my baby to sleep? How can I enjoy my two-year-old without the day ending in tears?

When I listened and applied the wisdom given my life as a mother changed.

A decade later, I am now a confident mother of four. I am proud of the way my children are growing. My household duties run like clockwork, with all helpers (under 10 years old) activated everyday. We sing, learn, work and have fun together. We frequently get comments from friends and strangers about how surprisingly well-mannered our children are (it's true!).

The Magazine

It has been a vision of mine to provide a platform where that kind of wisdom and knowledge can be shared. A place where young mothers can avoid the pitfalls and start enjoying their children, rather than seeing them as a burden.

It has taken a few years (I had to get my own mothering sorted first) but now the magazine, *Raising Godly Mothers*, has finally become a reality.

"The older women likewise, that they be reverent in behaviour, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things—that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed." (Titus 2:3-5 NKJV)

Some mothers have done just that for their own daughters. They now enjoy the reward from their labour, seeing their girls growing and becoming godly mothers themselves.

Those of us who have had to figure things out for ourselves can now glean from these mothers, whose hearts are to see other young women raised to be godly mothers.

Get In Touch

For more info' or to subscribe to the magazine visit: www.rgm.co.nz

Also, if you are an older mother who would like to write an article for future issues of *Raising Godly Mothers* or if you are a young mother who is struggling, please contact Shing at rgm@rgm.co.nz



RGM

Raising Godly Mothers

Inspired by Titus 2:3-5, RGM is dedicated to providing inspiring and insightful content that nourishes the hearts and minds of Christian homeschooling mothers in N.Z.

Join the Movement
If you are passionate about seeing the next generation of mothers strengthened in embracing their divine calling of motherhood, we would love for you to contribute.
Email: rgm@rgm.co.nz

For more info and subscription details:
www.rgm.co.nz

Letter to the Editor

Dear Kathryn,

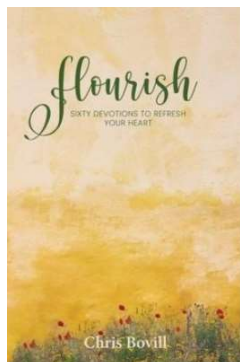
Congratulations to Max Carr and the layout team on the cover design of the August-September *The Christian Writer* magazine. The colour of the sea and sky and of the magazine cover headings complemented each other beautifully. The cover almost glowed.

The amazing rock formation reminded me of the old hymn *A mighty fortress our God* (based on scriptures such as Psalm 18:2 and Psalm 31:3). And to top it off, did the readers notice the lone seagull surveying the scene from the pinnacle of the rock?

Well done, photographer, Max. Well done, 'layout team'.

Ruth Linton

Book Review



Flourish

By Chris Bovill

Review by Julia Martin

Published by Torn
Curtain Publishing 2023

Flourish is a collection of 60 devotions Chris Bovill has compiled for the benefit of her family, but also to encourage readers in their Christian faith and relationship with God. She writes: 'This is a book to restore your faith in a loving God and refresh your heart so that you can truly *flourish*'.

For 20 years Chris has organised the annual HEART (Home Educators' Annual Retreat) which promotes and encourages parents and caregivers in homeschooling their children. She is passionate about strengthening families and helping women to grow and flourish in their God-given roles.

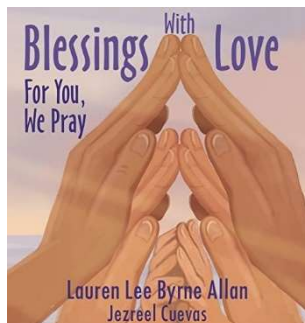
Chris draws inspiration for her devotions from her busy life as a farmer's wife, being the mother of six children she has homeschooled, her observations in the natural world, family holidays, everyday experiences and crises, and lessons from biblical characters. I found the devotions entertaining and inspiring.

Chris is open and honest and does not shy away from revealing her struggles and failures in life; but is also quick to supply the answers she has discovered from her ongoing relationship with God and His Word. Each devotion concludes with a relevant verse from scripture.

Her deepest desire is to grow to be more like Jesus, encourage those around her and wring as much joy out of each day as possible!

It's a delightful collection of inspirational devotions which I believe will be a joy to read and a gift to share with others.

Book Review



Blessings with Love, for You we Pray

By Lauren Lee Byrne Allan

Review by Julia Martin

Published by Auntie Lolly Books 2023

While Lauren has always loved storytelling and has been a teacher to hundreds of children around the world, this is her first self-published book.

Dedicated to her own son Isaiah, it contains rhyming prayers for him starting from his conception and following on as he progresses through childhood.

The story is written for all parents around the world who desire their child to grow up with faith in God as a foundation resulting in a life that displays the fruits of the Spirit such as love, joy, peace, grace, goodness and wisdom.

With strong character and healthy self-esteem, Lauren claims the child will have 'a moral compass that offers salvation, protection and might.'

I recommend this lovely book as an ideal gift for parents welcoming a new baby into their family.

Lauren's book is beautifully illustrated by Jezreel Cuevas in bold colours and figures with nature and New Zealand scenery as a backdrop.

It's also available in Spanish and te reo Māori languages.



South Island Christian Book Authors Network Meeting Report

by: Verna McFelin and Christine Nathan

The South Island Christian Book Authors Network held its fourth meeting on Saturday, September 2nd. We met informally over coffee at the Institu Café in Opawa. Twelve people attended, with nine apologies.

Advertising the Network

The event was advertised through churches well in advance and again closer to the date. New members received a Christian Writers membership form and information about the network.

The Meeting

We started the meeting with an informal chat. Then, the two gathering organisers, gave a brief welcome and overview of the next two hours. We advised attendees that they could either join NZ Christian Writers online or complete a physical copy of the form. Members can expect an email from Katherine, the newsletter editor, asking all members for their book updates, as NZCW will be cataloguing and marketing our books soon. The NZCW newsletter was circulated along with other book publishing resources. Then, each person introduced themselves and their writings. Those who had published brought their books for purchase.

We had an open forum meeting where anyone could ask questions about book writing.

Discussions centred around accounting and tax, marketing, getting started on a book, and distributing books to libraries.

Helpful discussions took place. Some members had already set up companies and we had one retired tax inspector who gave the pros and cons of setting up a company.

There was a discussion about the different types of editing and the importance of using a content editor before a book is published.

There were various discussions about self-publishing and book covers. Professional book covers can be designed through www.getcovers.com, Canva, or IngramSpark.

There is also, Reedsy, Upwork and Fiverr that provide full self publishing services but they are not New Zealand based. Verna drew attention to the NZCW magazine, where professionals advertise their writing and publishing services that are based in New Zealand.

As Amazon no longer supports e-books from New Zealand in their online bookstore, one of the members who published an e-book through Draft to Digital offered to take the group through that process at the next meeting in mid-February.

Christine is meeting with a member to help with memoir mapping to get her started in the book-writing process.

Facebook Group

Verna will invite the new members to the Facebook Group to continue discussions. We encouraged the group to "like" each other's posts so they could go further afield.

Riccarton Market

Verna has reserved our stall for Sunday, December 15th; a committee of three has been established to coordinate it. We'll need to offer more than just books to draw people to the stall.

Using AI

There were lively discussions about the pros and cons of AI. It can be beneficial to get your book started. Verna gave out a copy of the blurb for her book *The Invisible Sentence*, then asked AI to "Please make this book blurb a must-read?" Comments were that it was a bit over the top, and the original was much better.

The gathering organisers discovered that meeting at Dundee Place created a lot of work for them, so they decided to meet at a quiet venue with an onsite café like a library. The only cost involved will be for the hired room, which Verna will investigate, and it is expected to be around \$30.

The meeting closed at midday. We will provide the date and details for the next meeting in February at a later time.



Professional Writing Services

Are you a member who can offer a professional service related to writing or publishing? If so, you are welcome to advertise here for free! Send your advertisement of 100 words maximum to: editor@nzchristianwriters.org

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.

Graham Pedersen: 027 440 5851

E: gpetersen@hotmail.co.nz

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CHRISTIAN EDITING

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

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

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

Lola Goulton

E: lgoulton@christianediting.co.nz

I have over 20 years of experience as a copy editor and proofreader. I work on non-fiction

WRITING ANSWERS

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

E: WritingAnswers1@gmail.com

or Janette.Busch@gmail.com

WILD SIDE PUBLISHING

Demystifying the self-publishing process

Writing a book is hard enough without all the annoying and persistent questions about the next stages of the process (and the costs) buzzing your brain! We get it! Wild Side Publishing can help. Here's all you need to understand the process and costs:

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- Distribution to NZ stores and libraries.
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Ray Curle: 09 439 5717

E: ray@thewildside.net

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Colleen Kaluza:

E: colleen@wordwyze.nz

Visit <http://wordwyze.nz>

Redhill Camp

Would you like a place to 'get away from it all' so you can write that project you have in mind? Come and write at the Redhill Methodist Camp rugged retreat.



Redhill Camp is quiet and rural, with a 2km beach access to the west coast. It's pet friendly with Wifi available. Suitable for a single writer, couple or small and large Retreat groups.



Contact Kathryn for more information and to book your stay:
editor@nzchristianwriters.org

My role is not to solve others' problems. My role is to love them while they solve their problems.

Cec Murphey



How to Calculate Tax on Your Book Sales

(Article One of Three)

by Andrew Stirling

Andrew Stirling is the Treasurer of NZ Christian Writers and Managing Director of St Andrews Accounting Limited.

If you sell books in New Zealand, IRD considers you to be a business owner. This means you **must legally file annual tax returns** with IRD.

The only exceptions are:

You earn less than \$200 of income in a year, or you are a school student who earns less than \$2,340 per year.

A tax return covers the period 1 April to 31 March and needs to be filed before 7 July.

If you haven't filed tax returns in the past but should have done so, IRD can charge penalties and interest on any overdue amounts and prepare to take you to court if required.

If you fall into that category, please get in touch with me as soon as possible. I offer a 10% discount off my fee to NZCW members.

Now that I've got the bad news out of the way, I'll give you the good news.

It's not that hard to calculate and file a tax return. All you need is a little bit of computer know-how.

The other good news is that you may be eligible for a tax refund.

This is because tax due is calculated on profit, not income. If the expenses you incurred selling books exceed your income, you have made a loss. This loss can be offset against any other income you earn which may lead to a refund.

Over the course of three articles, I'll detail the basic steps to ensure you know how to file your own tax return.

The first step is to create a new bank account. If you already have internet banking set up, this should be easy enough to do. Once you have done this, use this bank account for all transactions relating to book sales from now on.

For income, if you sell books online, use this bank account number for payment. If you sell books by cash, make an internet transfer of this amount from your personal account to the business account as soon as possible. This instantly makes the cash yours. Then you can safely spend it on anything you like.

The same principle applies for expenses.

If you pay for anything online, use this bank account and clearly narrate what the expense is. If you pay for anything with cash, keep the receipt. Then transfer over this amount from your business account to the personal account. The same goes if you use your credit card attached to your personal account. Note that if you don't have the funds in your business account, just transfer an amount over from your personal account to top it up.

Expenses are any costs you have related to selling books.

Common expenses are:

Book printing costs, website costs, advertising, postage, subscriptions (e.g. NZ Christian Writers) and the portion of your home used as an office.

Keep using this bank account until 31 March.

In the next article, I'll tell you how to prepare the data from your bank transactions in a format ready to file with IRD.

Andrew Stirling andrew@saa.co.nz

Note that the information provided in this article is of a general nature. I do not accept liability of any kind whatsoever to any person for losses incurred as a result of placing reliance on this information.

I Need you More than Ever

by Rodney Hickman

Have you worked real hard to be the best
In your chosen field that's been your quest?
Sure you are successful, your luxuries don't hide
But has it made you arrogant, are you filled with pride?

I want to save movie stars, or famous people known by name
But also I choose to save those who have no claim to fame
And you ask me why I do that, so here's the reason why
I am after the lost and lonely, I heed the deepest cry

Perhaps you too can see, the need inside each man
To be redeemed and liberated, has always been my plan
But people only see me through the deeds and words you say
So I need you more than ever, be a blessing then today.

W E L C O M E New and Returning Members:

Bruce Mai

Auckland North

Bruce Minogue

Auckland South

Carlen Botha

Cheryl Christopher-Roulston

Auckland

Keith Okey

Linda Bartlett

Auckland West

Robert Prins

Auckland East

Sandra Miller

Pukekohe

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

Again and Again...

by Althea Barr (From her book of poems, *Follow Me*)

I will rise up on wings like an eagle,
I will tumble and not feel pain,
For You, Lord, are there to catch me,
Over and over again.

For the things I should do, I don't do,
Something else always gets in the way!
And I do the things I shouldn't,
Day after day after day.

I make Lent and Advent resolutions,
To spend time, Lord, with You more,
But something each day seems to get in the way,
With chore after chore after chore...

I will lift up my eyes to the heavens,
See the worlds upon worlds You have made,
Know that on this small spot You take care of me,
Although over and over I've strayed.

So...

I'll rise up on wings like an eagle,
I will tumble and not feel pain,
For You, Lord, are there to catch me,
Over and over again.



*Follow Me book
cover design by
David Barr*

Join a Writers Group

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Memorable Moments Montage



Nestled in 'them thar' Oropi hills, in the far corner of their son's farm, Jan and Han's lifestyle block is surrounded by native bush. They enjoy views extending north to the Kaimai Range (pictured) and east towards White Island. This beautiful, tranquil setting amidst God's creation, combined with Jan and Han's wonderfully warm and welcoming hospitality, has been the venue for the Tauranga Christian Writers Retreat since 2012. A time filled with ...

(continued) fireside fellowship, food and fun, as well as prayer, worship, listening, reflecting, writing and learning. Nine people gathered for dinner on the Friday night with two more joining on the Saturday. Jan had prepared a flexible programme that included collective activities such as writing, cooking and even feeding the hens. However, there were plenty of opportunities to spend alone time with God as well as other individual TCW members.



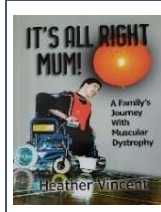
"I arrived at the bottom of the road armed with gumboots in the car, a good thing with the farm gate closed and the track covered in mud, water and runny cow poo. Having never been to a writer's retreat before, I didn't know what to expect, so was nervously anticipating what Jan had in store. What a weekend of fellowship, ministry, relationship building and knowledge growth. I came away rested and inspired, plus a big nudge from God to get on and write the book He has been prompting me to work on." – **Cathy** (right)

"I was tired when I arrived having been very busy with grandchildren, so it was lovely to be able to retreat to the countryside. Upon entering Jan and Han's home, I was enveloped in the warm, friendly atmosphere and immediately felt 'at home'. During the retreat, we were challenged to write down the vision for our writing. In line with this, I was able to record a story from one of our members for the book I'm working on. I was inspired by Jan's workshop on 'Writing for Children' but also enjoyed the free time to spend with the Lord, take an invigorating walk in the brisk fresh air and watch a great movie with friends. I came away feeling refreshed body, soul and spirit." – **Carol** (left)



"The whole weekend wasn't so much about actual writing, but about sharing our personal stories and encouraging one another. The culmination for me was just after Communion on Sunday. I had just completed a huge writing project: the publication of the revised edition of my book, 'It's All Right Mum!' Because it's an ongoing family story, I'd wanted my daughters to be with us, but they weren't able to come. 300 books were printed and ready to go on sale but, over the weekend I'd been seeking the Lord's direction on how to begin the process.

Finally, my husband Brian and I decided that, as this was the second edition of the book, there wasn't the same need to relaunch it. Friends at the Retreat had suggested other ways to market the book. After the Communion, they gathered around me and a box of the books. Laying hands on us, they prayed for God's blessing and that the message God had placed on my heart would bless and encourage all who read the book. That God's words, which had inspired the book, would not return to Him empty but they would accomplish His purposes." – **Heather**



Tauranga's Annual Retreat – 2023



"After Jan read Habbakuk 2:2-3 and asked us to go away and write our vision for the year, I asked the Lord for His vision and felt Him say, 'Continue to write about my dealings with you and the way I have guided throughout your life. What may seem ordinary and normal to you is not ordinary to another person. I am glorified by the word of your testimony.'

I asked again about specific subjects and was given a list of twelve stories from my life - one for each month of the coming year, that is...

(July '23-July '24). These popped into my head so quickly that I wrote almost without stopping. It was certainly a fruitful and inspirational time for me personally. Setting aside a time like that is a great way to be refreshed and renewed in our writing journey." – **Elaine**



"Inspired by other people's lives and stories. Learnt so much from Jan's experience with children's books, and the examples she shared for different age groups." – **Jenny**



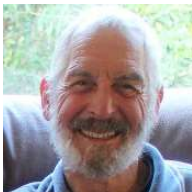
"Observing, listening and not wanting to interrupt the humming conversations emanating from small groups of, now, writer-friends on Sunday morning." – **Jan** (left)

"I thought Jan's talk was really informative. Being together with everyone was great too." – **Julie** (right)

"I am grateful to have connected with inspiring women of faith and learning new ways to develop characters. My cup was so full and overflowing." – **Jess**



"It was wonderful to meet new people and share our faith; pray into one another's lives in a specific way. Holy Spirit really ministered." **Catherine**



"Rabbit shooting with Brian and good food." **Hans**



"Getting away from it all and building a great relationship with my good friend Hans. Rabbit hunting kept us fit! The communion service on Sunday was a highlight. The climax to a wonderful weekend with special friends." – **Brian**

"May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God." Romans 15:5-7 ESV

Compiled and edited by Jenny Balmer





Mini bio: Introducing Level Two Judge Shirley Jamieson

I have loved reading books and writing since I was a child, encouraged by my mother, a trained teacher.

As an adult I had other priorities, but in the 1990s I joined NZ Christian Writers and entered a competition. It was a wonderful surprise to win first place, a great incentive to continue writing.

For several years, though, I didn't have time for writing at all.

I was married with three children. My youngest, Janelle, stopped breathing as a newborn, resulting in severe spastic quadriplegia. She needed total care 24/7. I cared for her until her early twenties when she moved into residential hospital care. She passed away when she was 29, leaving a huge hole in my life, but with many precious memories.

In caring for Janelle, God taught me to accept my own disability.

When I was born no one realized I had congenital cataracts. As time progressed, it was obvious I had problems. Eye operations were risky in the 1950s. Delay resulted in my optic nerves not developing properly. After operations when I was ten, I wore thick glasses, later a contact lens in my right eye, and now an interocular lens. My left eye sees only a blur.

Having partial sight and being a member of Blind Low Vision means there are some things I can't do, such as driving a car. There is so much else I can do though, and technology has opened the door for people with a sight disability. I have screen enlargement on my computer. It makes writing an achievable goal.

As the years passed by, my marriage broke up and my children reached adulthood. My son and daughter are both married, and my 9-year-old granddaughter is now writing stories and poems.

Over the years I often entered Christian Writer competitions, learning new skills in various genre and reaching Level Three.

I have written three books. The first, *Journey of Remembrance*, is the story of my father as a soldier in the NZ 6th Field ambulance in WW2.

The second, *A Different Road*, is the story of my life, living with partial sight, and in caring for Janelle, unpredictability was a daily expectation. The story is recorded on talking books for Blind Low Vision.

God used my trials to inspire me to write.

Apart from writing, my interests include gardening, archaeology and history. My cat Ellie is a delightful companion. I am a member of Christian Fellowship for Disabled, and the Women’s Institute. Teaching the Ladies’ Bible Study Group at church gives opportunities to dig into God’s Word.

In the past, my sister and I have had seven trips overseas together, visiting Italy, several other European countries, the UK, USA, Australia and Turkey.

My third book, *Ripple Effect, a family’s story of adventure and faith*, tells of my grandparents lives as missionaries in India years ago. Researching and writing it was a fulfilling experience.

2024 brings new challenges in accepting the position as judge for three of the Level Two competitions. I look forward to reading entries and encouraging members in their writing.

Writing Competitions Points Board

Level One		Level Two		Level Three	
Elaine Dixon	30	Rachel Larkin	27	Jean Crane	30
Stephen Douglas	21	Felicity Logan	27	Clive McKegg	15
Shelley Frost	12	Fiona Murray	9	Keith Willis	12
Julie Collins	9			Taylor Foster	12
Rachel Batten	9			Janet Fleming	9
				Ruth Jamieson	9
				Eion Field	9

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 usually awarded as Manna Christian Store vouchers. 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.

Please note published competition entries have not been edited.

Competition Results

Level One

Judge: Debbie McDermott

Requirement: Research the origins of Labour Day. Then write an article on its benefits from a Christian viewpoint and include a concise bibliography listing two to three sources from where you got your information. Your bibliography must be no more than 15% of the wordcount. (400 words, including the bibliography.)

General Comments

Congratulations to the three entrants who gave this competition a go. Each of you made an excellent effort in researching the topic and presenting the Christian point of view in your nicely written and well-balanced articles. Points were very close, with only minor errors determining placings. I awarded first place to Elaine Dixon, second place to Stephen Douglas and third place to Rachel Batten.

Having not done any pre-competition research myself, I was particularly interested to discover from reading the entries that it was the Christian worldview that influenced shortening the long hours for tradesmen and labourers to a standard eight-hour working day, and Labour Day officially becoming a public holiday in 1899. While many of our Statuary days may seem frivolous and unnecessary, Labour Day is surely a day to remember, with gratitude, those who challenged the status quo and played such a key role in improving the working conditions of employees.

*One of the key requirements of this competition was to include a **concise** bibliography, and to ensure it comprised no more than 15% of the stipulated wordcount. Two of the three entrants achieved this very well, but two of the footnotes provided by the other entrant should have actually been included in their bibliography because they were part of the research undertaken. Unfortunately, their bibliography was already very comprehensive, meaning they would have exceeded the wordcount had they correctly added these two footnotes to it.*

When wordcounts are so limited, it is important to ensure bibliographic information is kept as concise as possible. In many instances, just including the URL is sufficient; e.g. <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/people/samuel-parnell>; cited 01/08/23. This, of course, is dependent on who you are writing for and what their specific requirements are when it comes to bibliographies. With NZCW competitions, the rule of thumb is to keep your bibliography brief—particularly if you are required to include it in the wordcount. NB: It is not necessary to include titles, bibliographies and footnotes in the wordcount unless asked to do so in the competition requirements.

First Place



Elaine
Dixon
of Tauranga

The Benefits of Labour Day

Labour Day in New Zealand originated from the efforts of Samuel Parnell to bring about a shorter working day. When he arrived in Wellington, New Zealand in 1840 he insisted on an eight hour day before accepting an offer of work. In Parnell's words, "There are twenty-four hours per day given to us; eight of these should be for work, eight for sleep, and the remaining eight for recreation." There being very few skilled tradesman in the settlement, his employer was forced to agree with his terms.

By 1890 an eight hour working day was the accepted standard for tradesmen and labourers although there were still groups of workers who worked much longer hours. With the involvement of trade unions who publicised the situation through annual processions each October, Labour Day became a public holiday through an act of Parliament in 1899. Parnell was honoured as a pioneer of the eight hour movement and was given a public funeral when he died in 1890.

Parnell's attitude towards work arises from the prevailing Christian worldview of the time, where work is seen as a dignified calling from God and an opportunity to use our talents to glorify him. Colossians 3:23 reads, "Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people."

Again Galatians 6:4(NLT) reminds us, "Pay careful attention to your own work, for then you get the satisfaction of a job well done, and you won't need to compare yourself to anyone else."

The Bible teaches us that we are not to be lazy. Proverbs 13:4 warns, "Lazy people want much but get little, but those who work hard will prosper."

A Christian worldview also expresses the need for rest, and time to be renewed. God himself rested on the seventh day, thus implicitly showing we are not to become workaholics or slaves.

Balance is a key idea in the Christian view of work. Neither laziness nor overwork glorifies God, so Parnell's idea of three eight hour segments of allocated time lines up with biblical teaching. May we have a new respect for the benefits of Labour Day.

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1. Herbert Roth. 'Parnell, Samuel Duncan', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, first published in 1990. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1p7/parnell-samuel-duncan> (accessed 25 August 2023)

2. 'Labour Day', URL: <http://nzhistory.govt.nz/politics/labour-day>, (Ministry for Culture and Heritage), updated 27-Oct-2020

Second Place



Stephen
Douglas
of Lower Hutt

Labour Day – a Day off Work

Labour Day is celebrated in various countries, though the day observed will differ. This day commemorates the efforts of workers, particularly trade unionists, in the 19th century who advocated for the standardisation of a workday.

Historical records highlight the account of Samuel Parnell, who arrived in Wellington from London in October 1840. When asked to construct a store, he agreed, but under the condition that his workday would be from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., a departure from the gruelling hours in London.¹

Also, during this era, the government sort to address the needs of families and welfare. The Prime Minister, Michael Savage, referred to his outline of the government's social security proposal as 'applied Christianity.'²

While Parnell's claim and the reforms by the Labour Government are important for the 'worker', they may not be based on distinct Christian values. Nevertheless, Christians certainly should endorse social reforms such as fair labour conditions, support for the impoverished and family welfare. The teaching of the Bible addresses relative topics such as work, rest, valuing others and family with references to 'six days to do your work', keeping the Sabbath holy, the notion of God 'resting' and the wisdom of not "toiling long hours with little rest."^{3, 4}

In the 19th century, labourers endured long hours, dangerous conditions, poor payment and minors. The gains achieved through the persistent efforts of union workers and government employees are examples of Christian values such as compassion, equal treatment of employees, kindness and the humanitarian needs of all, not just a few. Labour Day is a tribute to workers' rights, diversity and the apportioning of time for work, recreation and rest; these align well with Christian principles.

For most people, figuring out what or who will be the centre of their lives is a significant choice. For Christianity, God is to be the centre, rather than careers, etc. Therefore, while Labour Day is a secular observance, for Christians it is both a physical and spiritual 'day off work'. It's a poignant reminder that El Shaddai (God Almighty) requires Christians to act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with their God.⁵

Footnotes:

1. Samuel Parnell; <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/people/samuel-parnell>; cited 01/08/23
2. Michael Savage; teara.govt.nz/en/biographies, Story of Savage, Michael Joseph, dictionary of New Zealand biography; cited 15/08/23
3. Holy Bible: Book of Exodus, chapter 20, verses 8–11 (Berean Standard Bible; BSB)
4. Holy Bible: Book of Psalms, psalm 127, verse 2 (BSB)
5. Holy Bible: Book of Micah, chapter 6, verse 8 (BSB)

Bibliography:

Labour Day; <https://digitalnz.org/stories/5f8a12c8047760001ee269a> Labour Day then and now/story; cited 01/08/23

<https://nzhistory.govt.nz/politics/labour-day> (Ministry for Culture and Heritage), updated 27-Oct-2020; cited 18/08/23

Michael King, The Penguin History of New Zealand, Penguin Books, Auckland, NZ, 2003

Rick Warren, The Purpose Driven Life, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49530, USA, 2002

Brian Easton, Not in Narrow Seas, Victoria University Wellington Press, Wellington, NZ, 2020

Third Place



Rachel
Batten
of New Plymouth

Labour Day

From a christian perspective there are many benefits stemming from the recognition and implementation of an eight hour working day. Firstly, the eight hour working day protects men, women and young people by establishing parameters around their working commitment. It establishes boundaries for those who could otherwise be taken advantage of. The christian basis for this assertion is found throughout scripture where God provides for the disadvantaged, e.g. the orphan and widow.

In the bible it says, 'that there is neither slave nor free, jew nor greek but all are in Christ.' Having an eight hour working day affords equal opportunities. The class system, prevalent in England at the time when Labour Day commemorations began, meant that those in the working class were, in most cases, limited in terms of rights, legal recourse and financial means. Implementing an eight hour working day disturbed the power imbalance of the class system and gave legal rights and recourse back to the employee.

Having an eight hour working day creates space for rest. After God created the heavens and the earth he rested. Legislating an eight hour working day meant some form of accountability for employers that these boundaries will be maintained, thus affording employees space for rest.

The eight hour working day brings stability, health and vitality to the family unit. It enables a balance of work, rest and recreational time meaning that employees are positioned for physical and mental health. It also means that, particularly in the time era during which it was enacted, the father figure, can be with his family after the working day is finished. He has greater opportunity to provide emotional support and build quality relationships with his family.

To conclude, in researching this particular topic, I feel grateful that those who have gone before us, have had the sensibilities to recognise the need for an eight hour working day and create legislation around this issue. As I have mentioned above, it has a far reaching impact on individuals, families and our society.

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Millen, Julia. *Colonial Tears & Sweat The Working Class In Nineteenth-Century New Zealand*. Wellington, Reed Ltd, 1984

Olssen, Erik. *Working Lives c. 1900 A Photographic Essay*. China, Rachel Scott, 2014.

Level Two

Judge: Lesley Edgeler

Requirement: Choose an old photograph. Write a short story inspired by the picture. Include a photo of the picture with your story. (500 words)

General Comments

The short story is a major challenge when given such a limited word count as 500 words. In fact, short stories are a skilful mastery of the many components of a novel or novelette squeezed into a miniscule version of the complete story.

Dissecting a short story involves looking at the theme, setting, plot, climax and resolution. Other aspects to consider are characterisation, rising action, metaphors and imagery.

Consider a recipe—to successfully follow it, one needs to have all the ingredients, measure them carefully and use the correct method, temperature and timeframe for success.

It is the same with a short story. The secret is to begin with a good hook and finish with a surprise ending or a twist.

In all good writing a ‘takeaway’ is a must. Does the reader want to include what they have learnt in the way she/he looks at a particular aspect of life? Has the story helped them understand, for instance, a medical condition better?

Recently, I read a Christian novel whose protagonist suffered from ADHD and received help to improve her life. This gave me a better understanding of this condition.

I received three well-written stories all with different themes and settings. I awarded Felicity Logan first place as she included her photo on the same page as the story and in a good size for the editor to work with.

Rachel Larkin's portrayal of the doomed pig, Wilbur, brought back memories of Charlotte's Web by EB White also featuring a pig's coming fate. Her photograph in large size gave me a great perspective on the laughter Wilbur caused when he ran in front of the assembled wedding guests.

Fiona Murray's nostalgic description of her Nana's visit gained her third place. Her photo medley, also in a larger size than required, depicted them both in different situations as Fiona grew from a young child to adulthood.

However, I had to delete points for the enlarged photos as they would not fit in the Christian Writer in that format.

In a short story, the writer needs to grasp the reader's attention immediately and leave him/her with a feeling of 'wow!'

Points to remember:

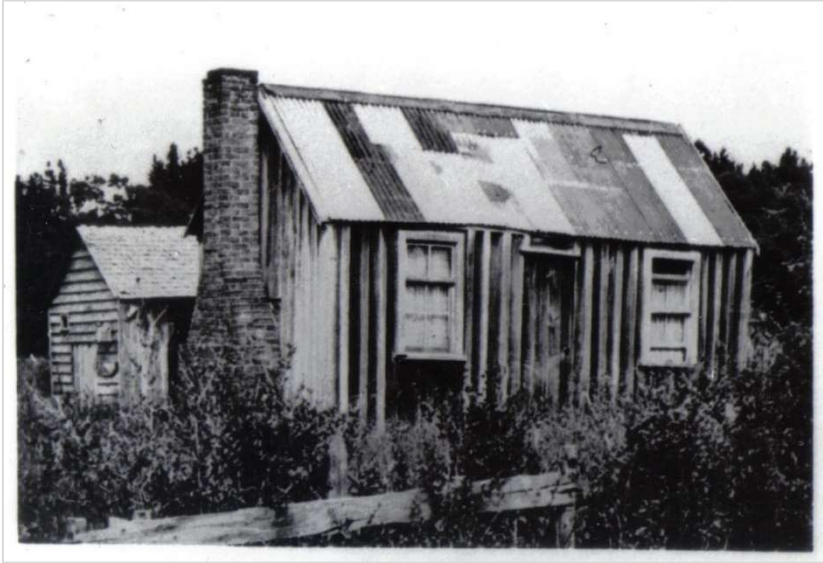
- *Write your story in full. Leave it and mull it over.*
- *Comb through it and delete all unnecessary words.*
- *Mark off all necessary components. Have you missed one of importance such as showing/not telling.?*
- *Does your story flow or drag in places.*
- *Is it unique?*
- *Have you followed all requirements set by the competition judge?*
- *Check for spelling mistakes.*
- *Check for spacing.*
- *Check for correct punctuation.*
- *Would the reader want to read more of your stories?*
- *Will the ending leave the reader disappointed, let down, or with a great sense of satisfaction?*
- *To hone your skills, borrow short story collections from your local library.*
- *Go through the stories to see how the writers have used their skills to present interest-holding stories.*

First Place



Felicity
Logan
of Feilding

Heaven is a Town House



“Life’s full of wonders,” my parents said. First it was a wonder I survived the voyage to New Zealand as an infant. Then it was a wonder after living with ten other families in immigrants’ barracks, that we finally got a town section in the Manchester Block, Feilding.

Big wonder, a two-roomed cottage with brick chimney! After renting it for three years we’d own it. Father worked in a sawmill, and Mother took in washing. We bought shiny new frypans. I loved the shop: piles of tin-cans, fabric rolls, laces and ribbons, big glass jars of rice and dried fruit, and boiled lollies for my birthday! The smell of spices and cured bacon was heavenly.

Father brought home a sideboard he had built in secret at the sawmill. Mother wept when she got it. “God in Heaven,” she sighed, running her hands over the surface. I loved the new-wood smell. I loved my sleeping nook next to the fire, my friends at Mrs Clement’s day school. At church the Reverend talked about “That Day”, and Heaven, but I had it already.

Suddenly it changed. We got allocated acres in the hilly bush! "It will be hard work," warned Father. "We'll hire a wagon for as far as the road goes. A company shed there can hold our belongings until we retrieve them. Just think, animals and a garden."

"I won't miss this town mud!" Mother was looking on the bright side.

So off we set. Reaching the end of the road we walked, carrying what we could. We lived under canvas while Father and my brothers built a very different house! Mother cooked outdoors at a fire and we sat on tree stumps. Father cut a tree trunk into four, then sturdy branches for side-pieces for a bed-frame. I helped Mother lace rope across and stuff a canvas mattress. For five of us? -- nothing wonderful!

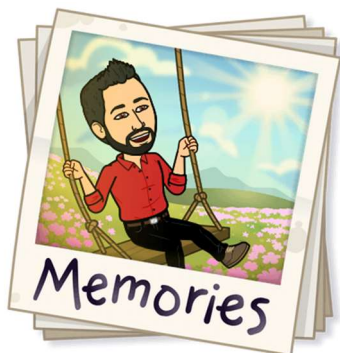
Father said the wonder was help for a sudden serious axe wound. Luckily a stray horse had arrived in our clearing after its owner died, and Samuel rode it to the town doctor's home that Bad Axe Day.

"A horse sent by Heaven," they said. We were allowed to keep it!

Our house cow Beauty is wonderful. So is roasted wild pig meat, the tumbling stream alongside our clearing, the bush pigeons my brothers got with their slingshots... then Mother's tasty pigeon pie with herbs from her garden.

I treasure the memory of the town house that's no longer ours. I live for town trips for supplies and church. We now have a brick chimney and a wash-house lean-to. Father says we'll get real glass windows when the boys sell enough possum and rabbit skins, and if he can get a few weeks' employment in town. And if our nearest neighbours send their children here for lessons from Mother in the extra room Father is building. Mother's list had slates, chalk, ink, alphabet and counting books, and small chairs. Hurrah!

Heaven? And yes, that's also the name of our horse.



Second Place



Rachel
Larkin
of Auckland

My Wilbur



The day Wilbur arrived was the best day of my life. He was the roundest pig I had ever seen. It is my job every morning to throw the food scraps over the gate. But most days I would sneak into the pen and feed carrots to Wilbur and caress his round belly. He is my best friend and the one I confide in. He grunts at just the right time in our chats, so I am sure he understands me.

It was getting busy and stressed around here that week. My big sister, Milly was getting married to Bill. I like Bill, he treats me like a grown man and shakes my hand when he comes to see Milly. Mum was fretting about the wedding plans and writing long chore lists for everyone. I must be more of a man now as I had my own chore list. It was my job to sweep the leaves and set out the chairs for the grownups.

I heard Pops make a joke and called Wilbur a walking pork chop. Not sure what that meant but Dad laughed, and I saw Granma kick Pops under the table and glance at me while Mum gave Dad the look. Something was up and it sounded like Wilbur was involved.

I only realised early in the week what the grownups were planning when I saw Dad assembling the spit in the barn. I spent most of the day sulking in the orchard out the back of the house trying to work out what I could do to help my friend Wilbur. By the end of that day, I came to a decision. I was going to free Wilbur. Yes, I was. They were going to kill Wilbur tomorrow and hang him until the wedding day, so I needed to act quickly.

I thought I had gotten away with it. Dad said Wilbur pushed the gate with his belly and slipped out by himself and he is up in the bush somewhere. Everyone was trying to find him. Pops kept looking at me in a funny way making my cheeks grow hot. I didn't think he knew but he was making me feel queasy.

The pig hunt was abandoned. Mum found out that half of Bill's family were Jewish and don't eat pig meat anyway. So, the wedding plans were back on track with a lamb cooking on the spit. I enjoyed the wedding, there were so many people milling about that no one saw me coming down the bush track with Wilbur. I tied him up to the post behind the barn and ran to the orchard for the photo session.

I must not have tied him up properly. Halfway through the photo session, when all the young ones were getting scratchy, who should make an appearance, but Wilbur! He strolled right in front of the photographer and scared poor little Tommy. I held my breath waiting for an angry reaction from the grown-ups. But they all laughed, especially Milly. Maybe Wilbur is now part of our family, just like Bill.

Third Place



Fiona
Murray
of Lincoln,
Canterbury

The Visit

You came to me in a dream. I didn't know what to do. I didn't know which direction to take. Unsure of the possibilities, I fell asleep, apprehensive about the next day.

You came to me in my dream. A clear vision of my visit to you. Just as you were, alive and well, my grandmother on this earth.

I came to you in my dream. Your room in the rest home, surrounded by darkness, the shadows of familiar objects playing with my eyes.

I came to you in my dream. I needed your wisdom. I needed your permission to go and fulfil the dreams of my heart.

I remembered you. The warm conversations. The fiery discussions. The bond we once had.

I remembered your immense will. Your strength in facing adversity. Your black and whiteness.

The matriarch of the family.

I sat down in the darkness, my eyes fixed on the radiant light from where you came. A door leading from the eternal to the temporal.

You sat down in your favourite chair. We began to talk. Just like old times. Just like every other visit I took to see you. Comfortably righting the wrongs of this world and voicing opinions to one another.

I told you about my plans. My plans to leave my home city and take up the job of my dreams. I asked you about them. What do you think, Nana? Should I go or stay? What should I do?

You smiled and nodded your head. Your gentle yet firm response was enough:

“Go and live your dreams.”

The visit was short. You didn’t stay long. Or had you stayed a long time?

You lifted yourself out of the chair and disappeared out of sight, the light encasing your soul until I could no longer see you anymore.

It was still dark in your room. Yet it was familiar. The same environment for our regular visits.

You were gone. Again.

I awoke, clearly remembering your visit to me. I went forward that day, reassured of the way in which I should go. A significant move of town, of job, of friends. It was going to be okay.

That morning, when my mother took me to the airport, I told her about my visit with you. She also nodded her head and smiled.

“It’s just a part of your grief, dear. She didn’t really visit you. But what a wonderful dream to have.”

My mother didn’t grasp my faith or my belief in the supernatural. So, was it only grief?

Was it simply a dream, or did she come to visit me?

I remember you, Nana. To this very day. I remember that visit, as clearly as the night it happened.

The Lord knew I needed you at a time when He was opening doors. His way of encouraging and moving me forward.

He opened a door into eternity. So I could talk with you once more. Just like old times.

I remember the visit.



Level Three

Judge: Julia Martin

Requirement: Write a letter to a young Christian friend or relative who is about to embark on a course of study at a secular university, advising him or her how to gain a qualification without compromising their faith and trusting in God and the Bible. (250 words)

General Comments

Years ago New Zealand was often referred to as 'God's own country' as our nation was founded on Judeo-Christian laws and principles and Christianity was the dominant faith of our people.

Sadly, this is no longer the case. New Zealand has become a highly secular country, and this is particularly evident in our universities and tertiary institutions today where everything seems to be tolerated except the teachings of the Bible.

Surveys suggest that at least two-thirds of young people who grew up in Christian homes or attended church regularly lose their professed faith after commencing tertiary studies in these schools.

A major reason is the fact that they are exposed to the hostile environment of evolutionary indoctrination and worldview and find themselves underequipped to defend their beliefs.

Obviously, some subjects studied are targeted more than others.

I believe this is a tragedy as so many of our young people lose their faith and walk away from the Christian church altogether.

This assignment involved writing a letter to a young person about to embark on study at a secular institution; giving sound advice as to how they can survive this difficult environment, retain their faith and trust in God and the Bible, and still graduate with their intended qualification.

I looked for a letter that was friendly and sincere and which offered wise counsel in a non-confronting or preaching manner.

I received eight entries which were all well-written and balanced in content. Most letters covered a variety of aspects including leaving home, choosing friends, coping with atheistic curricula and lecturers, along with the need for Christian fellowship and regular devotional time spent with God.

I had difficulty choosing a single winner, so awarded first place equal to Jean Crane and Clive McKegg. Second place went to Taylor Foster and third place to Eion Field who focused his letter on one specific area of science his nephew was planning to study.

My thanks to the other entrants who consistently send in their entries.

PS: I thoroughly recommend the resources available from Creation Ministries International to assist with this important issue.

First Place Equal



Jean
Crane
of Tauranga

A Letter to my Granddaughter

My dear Granddaughter,

So thrilled to hear that you have been accepted into University for your chosen programme of studies. This means you will be leaving home and learning to live on your own. To begin with, you will probably feel lonely, and wish you were back with family, so it is vital to seek out other Christians right from the start. Understand that you will be surrounded by non-Christian students, and could be influenced by their life style.

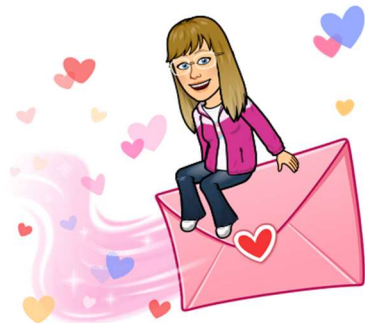
In your new environment, you will also come under the impact of extreme ideologies, and views, and hear derogatory statements about the Bible and the Christian faith. Don't be afraid to respond in a respectful manner to what you confidently believe is true.

One vitally important aspect of your life must be your daily devotional time with God. Spend time reading the Bible and praying between lectures or wherever you can. Let your relationship with the Lord deepen. Having fellowship with other Christians is also imperative, so join a campus Christian group and locate a good church to attend. These are great places to form lasting friendships.

I will be praying every day, that God will walk with you through this season of your life and keep you strong and focused on Him. Lamentations 3:22-23, 'The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; His mercies never come to an end, they are new every morning, great is His faithfulness.'

God Bless you always.

Your loving,
Nana.



First Place Equal



Clive
McKegg
of Whangarei

Off to Uni

Dear Bobby,

I hear you are heading off to University next year. That's a big step. Can I make some suggestions?

Firstly, find good friends. Leaving home is exciting, but can also be very lonely. The key is finding people that encourage you in your values, and build strong, supportive relationships. Don't be impressed by flashy people, but choose those who are humble but confident in their faith in God. Find friends who share common interests – sports or other pastimes. Study is important, but living a balanced life is essential.

It's also important to connect with older people who you can go to if you need to talk through serious issues – perhaps a chaplain or pastor? Hard times will come when you will need someone older and more mature. Challenges can then be times of growth rather than train-wrecks!

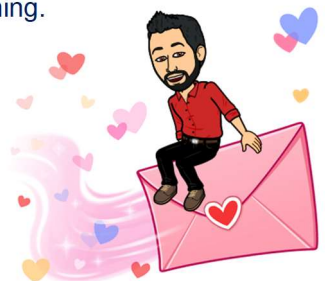
Finally, what you are taught can challenge your values. Always remember that Jesus is the smartest guy that ever lived. In Colossians 2:8 Paul says “See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy...” There are lots of persuasive ideas out there that will try to quench your faith.

Don't be afraid of knowledge, but challenge what you learn with the wisdom of God. Keep yourself sharp by meditating in scripture every day, and spending time being still before God. Commit each day to him and look for His leading.

And remember, call me if you need to talk about anything.

God bless,

Uncle Clive



Second Place



Taylor
Foster
of Tauranga

Dear Keegan

Dear Keegan,

Congratulations on getting into Waikato University. I'm really proud of you for applying and taking a leap of faith into the unknown.

I'm sure you'll enjoy the counselling course because, as you said, you want to be able to show people that there is at least one person in their life who cares for them. That's exactly what Jesus is all about. He'll always be the one who cares for us, even when no one else does. The fact that you'll be able to show people that love, and maybe even talk about him with others, is great.

As you study, you'll be very busy learning, but never stop doing what you're doing now: talking to God and hanging out with him. Keep making time for that. When you hold Jesus' hand and are in step with him, everything you do becomes important and meaningful because it's done with him. Just keep trusting God; he will steer you in the right direction.

Always remember that God is in every sphere of life, including education. He will walk with you into the university every day, supporting you and teaching you. So, keep looking at him, asking him questions and listening for his voice. No matter the ups and downs, he has a great plan for you, and each step in your journey, including this study, is a part of that.

I wish you all the best and am always here for support.

From Taylor



Third Place



Eion
Field
of Waikato

Letter to Raymond

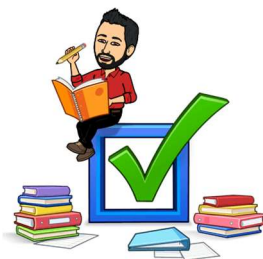
Dear Raymond,

I heard you're starting university soon, your course to include geology. One of its divisions is palaeontology, the study of fossils, and it's here you'll encounter evolutionary theory. Most geology lecturers favour the Darwin school of thought, you'll soon notice. Being grounded in the Christian faith, you well know that God created all living things; they didn't evolve.

So you'll have to tactfully acknowledge the evolutionary hypothesis while holding firmly to your faith-based understanding, demonstrating that it's well supported by pure science. This includes study of the "geological column" whose fossils supply no evidence for the gradual development of species. Further, no species has ever been observed evolving, though mutation or adaptation (neither being developmental) can occur. No mechanism in nature exists to enhance an organism by imparting new genetic information, more complexity and greater functionality. There is an absence of "inter-species" or transition forms in the fossil record, despite cleverly drawn text-book illustrations. And remember, statistically (by mathematics), bio-chemical chance reactions causing evolutionary progression are impossible; DNA studies show this.

There's other factors too; I'm sending a helpful book by science professor John Ashton PhD, soundly disclaiming evolution. Try to present these points in your palaeo assignments, while acknowledging the general flavour of the curriculum, likely biased toward Darwinism. It won't be easy but keep calm and reasonable, stay faithful, use cold hard scientific fact. Wishing you every success.

With love in Jesus name, your Uncle Orton.



Competitions for December 2023

Due by 1 November 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: Write a devotion with Christmas as its central theme. Include a Bible verse at the beginning and finish the devotion with four lines of poetry, preferably original. Don't forget to give credit to the writer if using someone else's poem and give your devotion an appropriate title. (400 words)

Email entry to Debbie McDermott at level1@nzchristianwriters.org



Debbie

Level Two—for members 16 years old and over

Requirement: Imagine hosting a Christmas event dedicated to the homeless in your community, most of whom haven't heard about Jesus. As a host, you will be required to open the event with a prayer. Compose an encouraging prayer that will convey the true meaning of Christmas and incorporate the words 'Spirit' and 'hope'. (300 words)

Email entry to Cindy David at level2@nzchristianwriters.org



Cindy

Level Three—for members 16 years old and over

Requirement: Write a poem in any format on a Christmas theme incorporating all five senses.

(Up to 24 lines)

Email entry to Julia Martin at level3@nzchristianwriters.org



Julia



NZ CHRISTIAN WRITERS is a nationwide collective of authors, bloggers, editors, lyricists, poets, publishers, songwriters, storytellers and writers throughout New Zealand. Along with our bi-monthly magazines and competitions we offer inspiring seminars and writers retreats to encourage, inspire and upskill people in their writing.

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.