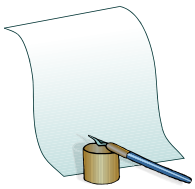


WORDSMITHS NEWSLETTER
November 2025

Welcome to the final edition of Wordsmiths newsletter for 2025.

Recently I was approached by our Vicar, who asked if I would be interested in starting up a writing group. Seeing as the writing group would operate monthly, I spoke to a younger member of the congregation who is also into writing, and together we decided that yes, we would kick-start a group and see how much interested this generated.

So next came a title. What could we think of that was snappy, age-inclusive and most of all, inviting? After brainstorming some pretty weird combinations, we came up with *The Write Stuff Café*….as we were, after all, going to be writing and writing 'stuff' and stopping for a cuppa and cake half way through to foster fellowship amongst the participants.

Megan and I put together an outline of how the sessions would pan out – introductions, first half hour writing, then time for sharing, stop for much-needed sugar and caffeine, more writing, more sharing, lots of laughter, getting to know each other, trading ideas and mentoring.

The Write Stuff Café has now been operating for three months and it's been more fun than I could have anticipated. At the first meeting, one guy managed to put his weekly to-do list together; another lady wrote a song which she sang to us; the assistant Vicar drafted her sermon for the following Sunday and another lady wrote a short piece about how blessed she felt being able to just sit and write with no other distractions.

Megan and I are providing everyone with competitions and opportunities, a box of writing prompts each meeting, and new ideas to get creative brains moving. What has come out of the sessions is that the church pastoral staff have agreed on the need for creative writing to be included in Sunday services. So this month, it's Christmas poems and stories. My turn to bake an apple cake. You're more than welcome.

Leigh Hay

MEETINGS

For the August meeting, **Maree Silver** led with the poetry of Kirli Saunders (OAM) a proud Gunai Woman. Kirli is an award-winning multidisciplinary artist, an author of nine books, singer-songwriter and consultant, who creates, to connect, to make change. She was awarded an Order of Australia Medal for her contribution to the arts (2022). Kirli has partnered with global organisations including Google, Fender, Sydney Opera House, Qantas and Spotify, Mecca and Aesop on visual art and writing projects. Maree read *Bloom*, *Mother*, *Wildflower Aftermath*, *Hard learning*, *Little One*, *Sun Downs and Seasons*.

Cecily Falkingham led the September meeting with a poem by Alexander Pope. Pope was an English poet, translator and satirist of the Enlightenment era who is considered one of the most prominent English poets of the early 18th century. Born on 21 May 1688, he died in London on 30 May 1744. Pope is often quoted in The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations, some of his verses having entered common parlance (eg *damning with faint praise*, or *to err is human; to forgive, divine*). Cecily read *Ode on Solitude*.

Florence Lisner led the October meeting with the poetry of David Whyte. Born 2.11.1955, Whyte is an Ango-Irish poet. His poetry and philosophy are based on the conversational nature of poetry. His mother was from Waterford in Ireland and his father a Yorkshire man, and Whyte attributes his poetic interest to both the songs and poetry of his mother's Irish heritage and to the landscape of West Yorkshire. Whyte has a degree in Marine Zoology and has worked as a naturalist and lived in the Galapagos Islands. He moved to the United States in 1981 and is the author of 10 volumes of poetry and 4 books of prose. He has committed over 100 poems to memory. Florence read *The Well of Grief*, *The Journey* and *The Bell and the Blackbird*.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Unless notified otherwise, meetings will be held at Carolyn Vimpani's at 8 Woodhouse Road, Doncaster East. Zoom facility will also be available if possible.

Note that the December Christmas meeting will commence @ 1.00 pm with everyone bringing lunch to share, followed by our usual meeting @ 2pm.

Month	Leader	Afternoon tea
Nov 8th	Leigh	Jemma, Peter, Maree N
Dec 13th	Peter	all bring a plate to share

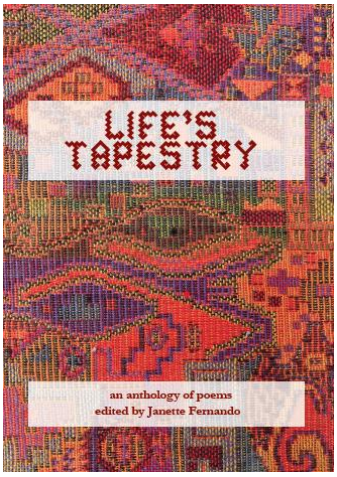
MEMBER NEWS

For those poets who knew **Jennifer Chrystie**, it was gratifying to hear from her husband John, that one of Jen's poems *A Conversation with Ants* has been included in Australia Poetry's new digital journal, *Australian Poetry Digital*. Jen passed away on 16 November last year. The journal, edited by Jacinta Le Plastrier, showcases work exclusively from their subscribers and the digital publication highlights the talent and range of contemporary Australian poetry and the vibrant community of poets.

David Dwyer turned on the radio recently to Regional ABC to discover they were talking about *Daylesford Words in Winter*.
They had a person talking about haiku and inviting people to text or call in their haiku. David phoned in and spoke out two of his recent haiku poems. A person judging the best said that they couldn't decide between two, one of which was David's. The ABC sent David a prize pack. Unfortunately for David, he was not told which haiku had been declared the winner. David's two haiku poems are included in *Poets Corner* in this newsletter.

Congratulations to **Florence Lisner** whose poem *That time…* was awarded second prize in the St Arnaud Friends of the Library Writing competition.

LAUNCH OF PCP'S 2025 ANTHOLOGY



POETICA CHRISTI PRESS invites you to the launch of LIFE'S TAPESTRY, an anthology of poetry edited by Janette Fernando to be launched by Julien Winspear on Saturday, December 6th at 2 pm.
Where : Ashburton Baptist Church. Enter through rear entrance on Marquis St. Books available from 1.30 pm, official launch at 2.00 pm, followed by refreshments.
Life's Tapestry includes poems by the winners of the 2025 PCP Poetry competition with contributions from the Wordsmiths of Melbourne and others. A number of poets will have the opportunity to read their work.
RSVP: by December 3rd, to Poetica Christi Press, phone: 0422 887 228 or send an email: poetica@iprimus.com.au

JUDGES REPORT ON LIFE'S TAPESTRY

Judging a poetry competition is like being forced to choose your favourite child. When you have just one it is easy, but when you have 221 you face an enormous challenge – no one ever wants 'Sophie's Choice' question – all 221 of these 'children' contain special qualities and unique features making each one so valuable and precious.

So, how to choose? What is it that allows some poems to resonate, to reverberate and then return long after they have been read? What allows some poems to speak so strongly that re-reading reveals ever deeper messages, greater insights and richer rewards? In these poems we feel the power of images, the creativity of ideas, the originality of words, the precise weight of rhythm, the strength of a final line and the soaring originality within a moment of life. These poems lead us deep inside and far beyond what we already know, opening doors to richer worlds and other ways of seeing those we love, relationships we treasure and the beliefs we hold about this one precious life. These poems examine the smallest things and hold the largest revelations. Mary Oliver, the great American poet, captured this essence in her poem *The Summer Day*

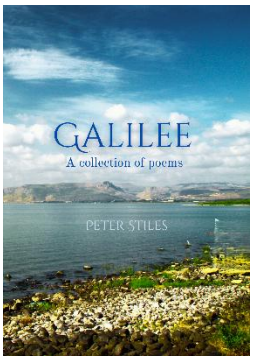
… I don't know exactly what a prayer is.
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,
which is what I have been doing all day.
Tell me, what else should I have done?
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
Tell me, what is it you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life?

What is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life? The poems in this collection explore so many rich possibilities. These poems are gifts for the heart, and the soul.
Paul Grover (Editor, *Studio)*

Prize winners :
First prize went to Rosemary Blake for her poem *Voice*, Runner-up was Jake Dennis for his poem *Discovery playground*
Highly commended were Toni Brisland for *Load-bearing* and Colleen Keating for *Reflection.*

Congratulations also to Wordsmiths Peter White for *All is Quiet* and Xiaoli Yang for *Space* as these poems were chosen in the top 25 by the judge.

LAUNCH OF *GALILEE*



Poetica Christi Press has recently published the third book of poems by Peter Stiles. It was launched on August 14th at Excelsia University College, Pennant Hill, NSW. Ian Keast said this about the book: '*Galilee* has at its centre an exploration of *place.* The opening, and title poem, 'Galilee,' introduces the richness and vividness of *place.* The paradox: extraordinary from ordinary; the miraculous from the mundane; flows from the poet's Introduction. *Place* becomes more than just physicality – it also conveys personal and emotional *place.* Memory conjures up *place,* with its assurance and peace. The poetry of *place* in **Galilee** moves through this combination of the physical; the personal/emotional; and memory … Many poems illustrate the accessibility, depth and wide concerns; and the heart, of this impressive collection of poetry. Copies are available for $20 via our website www.poeticachristi.org.au.

WELLSPRING CENTRE

Winds of Change through Art & Poetry - November 15
A morning of reflection, creativity and conversation with the opportunity to consider 'winds of change'. With inspiration from art and poetry, you will have time to explore and give creative expression to your thoughts and experiences.
Please bring a notebook and a sense of curiosity and adventure. Lunch provided - please indicate any dietary requirements when completing your registration. Places are limited so please register soon.
Facilitators: Liz Johnson and Janine Johnston
15 November, 9.15-1.00pm. Registrations close 13 Nov. https://www.wellspringcentre.org.au/events

Remembrance Service
3 December, 7:00pm, Ashburton Baptist Church. Anniversaries, birthdays, and Christmas can be tender and difficult times to face. Grief touches us all in different ways—through the loss of a loved one, the ache of separation, an estranged child, an unknown parent, an unfulfilled hope, or a dream left behind. This Remembrance Service offers a gentle space to pause, reflect, and honour our losses before the busyness of the festive season begins. Together, we remember, give thanks, and hold our stories with care. Conducted by Cathy Elkington and Captain Erin Mains. Light supper to follow - please register your attendance https://www.wellspringcentre.org.au/events.

COMPETITIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

Pen and Possibility
A new online writing journal that publishes monthly themed publications and delves into the how of writing. Open to submissions of any format providing the contribution works with the theme. https://www.penandpossibility.com.au/emergingpossibilities/submissionguide
More : www.penandpossibility.com.au

Catchment – Poetry of Place
Open to Australian residents. Theme: Linked to location. Accepts Poetry & Tanka. Poetry 30 lines, Tanka 5 lines. No entry fee. Publication in online journal. Closing date : 21 November 2025.
More : https://www.bawbawartsalliance.org.au

Newcastle Poetry Prize
Open to Australian citizens and permanent residents aged over 18 years. No theme. Poem or suite of poems, 200 lines. Entry fee $35.20 (members $30.25). First prize $15,000. Closing date : 7 December 2025.
https://hunterwriterscentre.org

Positive Words Mini Competition
Open to everyone. Theme : contains the word *Delight*. Short story or poetry. 100 words or 10 lines. Entry fee $3 in unused stamps. Prize : six months subscription to Positive Words. Closing date 30 November 2025.
https://positivewordsmagazine.wordpress.com

WRITERS VICTORIA EVENT

Uncovering the Gold: Writing and Sharing New Poetry with Amy Bodossian. Cost: $100
Venue: 176 Lt Lonsdale St, Melbourne.
Sat 15 November 2025 – 10 am – 1 pm
You Will Learn to - trust the creative process and move through blocks - What makes a poem pop, How to feel safe, free and comfortable sharing your words in a group - How to play with language and have fun with it. Register through program@writersvictoria.org.au. (03) 9094 7849

Send any news for the February 2026 newsletter to treehousepoet318@gmail.com by January 15, 2026.
Newsletter edited by Leigh Hay and Janette Fernando.

POET'S CORNER

Voice

Even in a whisper from the stage
your voice could reach the gods

or hallooing from an open window
find the top of Tunnel Mountain

and once - October growing dark
under the lodge-pole pine –

two white-tailed deer had come
to peer in as if listening to the syllables

that hung like an echo in the air

You sent us postcards from your home
in Nova Scotia – signed, always

'Angels surround you'

You said you believed in angels – could hear
the slightest rustling in a windless stir

of leaves, the shuffle of light on night-trails
under pine and black spruce by the river
the wind-drifts on Mount Rundle
rising into cirrus

© Rosemary Blake (Winner, PCP competition)

All is Quiet
Windy Saddle, Wilson's Promontory

all is quiet

new green fronds of eucalypt
smother the black
mask gentle surrounds
of returning life

occasional lullaby
of unknown avians
brought on the cool refreshing breeze

the royal curtains are mostly closed
sun glimpse through occasionally
heralding the blue

a flutter of wings
beats a drum solo

leaves swish and sway
tops of trees wander across the sky
and back again
tracing the same arc
a bird chants
another responds
from somewhere within
new green fronds of eucalypt

and all is quiet

© Peter White

Space

the in-between place
the breathing moment
the meditative pause
silence of Selah softly plays
hidden treasures are mined in the depths
infinite creativity is carried to the heights
inhaling exhaling
being becoming
attending floating
ballooning soaring
to the kaleidoscope of
colours
shapes
sounds
in the boundless expanse

the sacred hush
of vast universe
absence
between notes
endless
possibilities

© Xiaoli Yang

God's Light – a haiku

It is always true
that God's light comes shining through
in the darkest night.

© Daryl Pobke

Haiku

To live without love
Is when all is said and done
To breathe without air.

Shakespeare's quill in hand
Perhaps I will be inspired
To write a sonnet.*

© David Dwyer

**Inspired by the Shakespeare Trail in Stratford, with a feature of Shakespeare's desk and quill*.