



October 6, 2025

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Word Guild Celebrates Excellence in Canadian Christian Writing at 37th Annual Awards

MARKHAM, ON — The Word Guild hosted its 37th annual awards ceremony on Saturday, October 4, 2025. This virtual event recognized both unpublished works and those published in 2024, encompassing genres for Christian and general market audiences. Entrants from across Canada competed in over 50 categories, showcasing the diverse talent within the Canadian literary community.

The evening was brought to life by our co-hosts, affectionately known as *The Fab Four*: **Sara Davison, Helena Smrcek, Melanie Stevenson, and Darlene Turner**. Their story detailed how a shared writing journey between friends led to the formation of their group, serving as an inspiration for all writers to seek out their own "Fab Four" for connection and support.

Successful Outreach Fuels Surge in Submissions

This year, The Word Awards experienced a significant increase in submissions, especially among student writers in the Fresh Ink category. This increase is attributed to nationwide outreach to schools conducted earlier this year, combined with the elimination of entry fees for high school and university students to encourage participation.

Specialty Award Winners

These awards celebrate works that provoke thought, honour diverse experiences, and highlight the richness of Canadian storytelling.

- **Best Book Cover:** Terrie Todd (Portage la Prairie, MB) for *Even if We Cry*. Cover design by Lynnette Bonner. Published by Mountain Brook Ink. Sponsored by Living Books Inc.
- **Debra Fieguth Social Justice Award:** Paul Boge (Winnipeg, MB) for *Mully Children's Family Transformations – The Charles Mulli Legacy*. Published by Castle Quay Books. Sponsored by HH Communication Services.
- **Harvey/Mackey Journalism Award:** Jamie Munday (Kelowna, BC) for *Mission Inversion*. Published by Faith Today. Sponsored by the Mackey Family.
- **Indigenous Author Award:** Garfield Mark (South Porcupine, ON) for *From Turmoil to Peace—A Personal Testimony of God's Care Over a Lifetime*. Published by testimony/Enrich. Sponsored by Janis Cox.
- **Writer of Colour Award:** Daniel Im (Edmonton, AB) for *The Discipleship Opportunity*. Published by NavPress. Sponsored by That's Life! Communications.
- **Castle Quay Best New Canadian Manuscript Award:** Susanne Dobbin (Brantford, ON) for *Heads Up*. Sponsored by Castle Quay Books.



Best Book Award Winners

The Best Book Awards highlight outstanding contributions to Canadian literature, recognizing works that resonate with readers and reflect the values of the Christian community.

The **Best Fiction Book** award, sponsored by Jack Taylor, went to **Susan Doherty** (Westmount, QC) for ***Monday Rent Boy*** (Random House Canada). Doherty offered a compelling acceptance speech, noting that the recognition is "a powerful affirmation that stories like this matter, that we cannot look away from the truths that make us uncomfortable. Discomfort is often the doorway to change."

The award for **Best Non-Fiction Book** went to **Alastair Sterne** (Victoria, BC) for ***Longing for Joy*** (InterVarsity Press). This award was generously sponsored by the book, *The Immortal Mind: A Neurosurgeon's Case for the Existence of the Soul*, by Michael Egnor and Denyse O'Leary. In his acceptance video, Sterne said, "I was surprised at how joy met me not at my best, but actually at my worst. And so I wrote this book in hopes that people who are pursuing joy... might discover the possibility of joy that meets us exactly where we are."

Quotes

"I want to... thank all of you for your entries, for your participation in The Word Guild, for you dedicating yourself to be a better writer, and be a part of our organization," said David Kitz, Chair of the Board of The Word Guild.

Les Lindquist, Treasurer of The Word Guild, shared a relevant verse: "One of my favourite verses is Ephesians 4:16, 'From him, the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, **as each part does its work.**' It's exciting to see these writers who have been doing **their** part to build up the body. The challenge to all of us is to do **our** part by writing what God puts on our hearts. And to do it with excellence!"

Congratulations to The Word Award winners of 2025!

About The Word Awards:

The Word Awards were established to encourage the pursuit of excellence in the art, craft, practice and ministry of writing and help raise the profile of Canadian writers who are Christian. For more information about The Word Guild please visit www.thewordguild.com.

A copy of the complete list of winners for The 2025 Word Awards is available at www.thewordguild.com/media.



The Word Guild is Pleased to Announce
The 2025 Word Awards Winner's List
Honouring the Best of Canadian Christian Writing from 2024

UNPUBLISHED WORK CLASSES

FRESH INK {Student Writing Awards}

FRESH INK – MANUSCRIPT FIRST 3 CHAPTERS (High School) | *Sponsored by Neil Bramble*

- **Winner:** Jada Kaastra: Clinton, ON “*Never Safe*”

FRESH INK – NON-FICTION PIECE (High School) | *Sponsored by Faith Today*

- **Winner:** Ethan Geurts: Kemptville, ON “*Walking in a Woodland Wilderness*”

FRESH INK – POETRY (High School) | *Sponsored by an Anonymous Donor*

- **Winner:** Haley Hummel: Stratford, ON “*Don't You Know*”

FRESH INK – POETRY (University) | *Sponsored by Joel Crawford*

- **Winner:** Christopher Germain: Hamilton, ON “*Safe in the Fold*”

FRESH INK – SHORT STORY (High School) | *Sponsored by Sharon Bacon and an Anonymous Donor*

- **Winner:** Christian Bacsa: Toronto, ON “*Etude Of Quelled Pride And Wartime*”

FRESH INK – SHORT STORY (University) | *Sponsored by Neil Bramble*

- **Winner:** Sarah VanZandbeek: Edmonton, AB “*By Name*”

IN THE BEGINNING {Unpublished Author Awards}

MANUSCRIPT – FIRST 3 CHAPTERS | *Sponsored by That's Life! Communications*

- **Winner:** Mark McLeod: Okotoks, AB “*The Comrie Kids: The Story of Clan McLEOD*”

NON-FICTION PIECE | *Sponsored by That's Life! Communications*

- **Winner:** Mark McLeod: Okotoks, AB “*The Year We Won The Stanley Cup*”

POETRY | *Sponsored by That's Life! Communications*

- **Winner:** Elise Johnson: North York, ON “*Waiting Room of My Soul*”

CASTLE QUAY BEST NEW CANADIAN MANUSCRIPT | *Sponsored by Castle Quay Books*

- **Winner:** Susanne Dobbin: Brantford, ON “*Heads Up*”
- **Honourable Mention:** Gabrielle Stein: Barrie, ON “*Risen From The Ashes*”
- **Honourable Mention:** Michelle Teigrob: Peterborough, ON “*Joyfully Star-Mapping Through Life's Dung-Piles*”

DIGITAL ENTRY CLASSES

SONGWRITING AWARD

- **Winner:** Steve Bell: Winnipeg, MB “*One Can Hope*”

ARTICLES / SHORT PIECES (ASP) – CHRISTIAN

BLOG – PERSONAL

- **Winner:** Lynn Dove: Cochrane, AB “*Lady Aurora*”

BLOG – TOPICAL

- **Winner:** Matthew Ruttan: Oro-Medonte, ON & Sarah Joy Covey: Elmvale, ON “*Recovering the lost art of porch-sitting and the evening constitutional*” published by Faith Today

COLUMN SINGLE & COLUMN STANDALONE | *Sponsored by Drew Keith, Edward Jones Investments*

- **Winner:** David Guretzki: Ottawa, ON “*Speaking the(ir) truth: How Pontius Pilate demonstrates abuse of power*” published by Faith Today
- **Award of Merit:** Rev. Dr. Ed Hird: Surrey, BC & Janice Hird: Surrey, BC “*John Calvin, Father of Calvinism*” published by Light Magazine

DEVOTIONAL/INSPIRATIONAL | *Sponsored by testimony/Enrich*

- **Winner:** Evelyn Pedersen: Mississauga, ON “*He Became Nothing*” published by Proclamation Press

LONG FEATURE | *Sponsored by Neil Bramble*

- **Winner:** Randal Rauser: Edmonton, AB & Bob Stenhouse: Edmonton, AB “*Disabusing the Church: How can we protect the people we love and our shared institutions?*” published by Faith Today

NEWS | *Sponsored by Dana Friesen*

- **Winner:** Ilana Reimer: Vancouver, BC “*The Church’s Global Future: Canadians look ahead to collaborating at Lausanne 4 in Korea*” published by Faith Today

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE | *Sponsored by testimony/Enrich*

- **Winner:** Philip Serez & Robyn Serez: Kitchener, ON “*The terrifying delight of losing everything*” published by Faith Today

PERSONAL OPINION | *Sponsored by Light Magazine*

- **Winner:** Aimee Patterson: Winnipeg, MB “*Making Room for Inefficiency*” published by Faith Today

POETRY | *Sponsored by an Anonymous Donor*

- **Winner:** Naomi Pattison-Williams: Camrose, AB “*The Midwife*”

PROFILE/HUMAN INTEREST | *Sponsored by testimony/Enrich*

- **Winner:** Patricia Paddey: Winnipeg, MB “*Making Waves for Justice’s Sake*” published by Faith Today

SHORT FEATURE | *Sponsored by Faith Today*

- **Winner:** Helena Smrcek: Brantford, ON “*The Symbolism of It All*” published by Christian Life in London



ARTICLES / SHORT PIECES (ASP) – GENERAL MARKET

COLUMN SINGLE/STANDALONE | *Sponsored by That's Life! Communications*

- **Winner:** Sally Meadows: Saskatoon, SK “*Churchill, Elvis, and My Father's Writing Legacy*” published by Saskatchewan History & Folklore Society

LONG FEATURE | *Sponsored by That's Life! Communications*

- **Winner:** Doug Lett: Saskatoon, SK “*Unique School Helps Teens Rebuild Their Lives*” published by The Epoch Times

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE | *Sponsored by That's Life! Communications*

- **Winner:** Allison Lynn Flemming: St. Catharines, ON “*Touch the Horizon*” published by Chicken Soup for the Soul LCC

PUBLISHED BOOKS CLASSES

BOOKS – CHRISTIAN FICTION

CHILDREN – CHRISTIAN

- **Winner (Tie):** Jordan Hageman: Stoney Creek, ON “*The Storywriter*” published by Word Alive Press
- **Winner (Tie):** Kathleen Templeton: Calgary, AB “*Jar of Tears: Moms aren't supposed to die*” published by Kathleen Templeton

CONTEMPORARY

- **Winner:** Tamara Wanner: Moose Jaw, SK “*Rainbow Baby: Unravelling by Loss*” published by Word Alive Press

HISTORICAL

- **Winner:** Ellen Hooge: Calgary, AB “*Daughters Of Havah Volume One - Matriarchs of Israel*” published by Sparrow House Collective

MYSTERY | *Sponsored by MurderWillOut Imprint*

- **Winner:** Beverley Hopwood: Durham, ON “*In the Clear*” published by Beverley Hopwood

NOVELLA | *Sponsored by More Than Enough financial fitness*

- **Winner:** Helena Smrcek: Brantford, ON “*Love Across Time*” published by Fab Four Press

ROMANCE | *Sponsored by Carol Ford*

- **Winner:** Helena Smrcek: Brantford, ON “*Once Upon a Horse*” published by Helena Smrcek

SPECULATIVE | *Sponsored by Word Alive Press*

- **Winner:** Johanna Frank: Kitchener, ON “*Here Lyeth*” published by Johanna Frank

STORIES

- **Winner:** Eleanor Bertin: Botha, AB “*Unremarkable Sue*” published by Leaf & Blade Publishing

SUSPENSE | *Sponsored by MurderWillOut Imprint*

- **Winner:** Laura Thomas: West Kelowna, BC “*Captured in Frame*” published by Mountain Brook Ink

YOUNG ADULT

- **Winner:** Chantal MacDonald: Moncton, NB “*Peace on a New Horizon*” published by Chantal MacDonald

BOOKS – CHRISTIAN NON-FICTION

ACADEMIC | *Sponsored by Carol Ford*

- **Winner:** Mark Glanville: Vancouver, BC “*Improvising Church*” published by InterVarsity Press

BIBLICAL STUDIES | *Sponsored by David Kitz Productions*

- **Winner:** Stephen G. Dempster: Moncton, NB “*The Return of the Kingdom*” published by InterVarsity Press

CHILDREN

- **Winner:** Lana Shupe: Shelburne, NS “*The Little Church Beside the Sea*” published by Morning Dove Press

CHRISTIAN LIVING – PERSONAL GROWTH | *Sponsored by Susan Doherty*

- **Winner:** Julie Lane-Gay: Vancouver, BC “*The Riches of Your Grace*” published by InterVarsity Press

CULTURE

- **Winner:** Richard Long: Ottawa, ON “*The City-Wide Church: Unity That God Blesses*” published by One Way Ministries

DEVOTIONAL

- **Winner:** Wendy Addison: Spencerville, ON “*God Moments - Volume 1: 30 Daily Devotions to Awaken and Grow Your Faith*” published by Olde Crow Publishing

LIFE STORIES – MEMOIR

- **Winner:** Susan Barclay-Hawley: Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON “*Shadow Gifts: Finding Beauty in the Darkness*” published by Susan Barclay-Hawley

BOOKS – GENERAL MARKET FICTION

CHILDREN | *Sponsored by That's Life! Communications*

- **Winner:** Karen Autio: Kelowna, BC “*Playdate Surprise*” published by Scholastic

CONTEMPORARY | *Sponsored by That's Life! Communications*

- **Winner:** Susan Doherty: Westmount, QC “*Monday Rent Boy*” published by Random House Canada
- **Award of Merit:** Matt Robbins: Salmon Arm, BC “*All Enemies Foreign and Domestic*” published by Castle Quay Books

SPECULATIVE | *Sponsored by That's Life! Communications*

- **Winner:** Shireen Jeejeebhoy: Toronto, ON “*The Soul's Awakening*” published by Shireen Jeejeebhoy

YOUNG ADULT | *Sponsored by That's Life! Communications*

- **Winner:** Christina Van Starckenburg: Regina, SK "*Shadows of Memory and Stone*" published by Christina Van Starckenburg
- **Award of Merit:** Catherine Witzaney: Lacombe, AB "*Wingless*" published by Chicken Scratch Books

BOOKS – GENERAL MARKET NON-FICTIONCHILDREN | *Sponsored by That's Life! Communications*

- **Winner:** Cindy Palin: Olds, AB "*Every Once in a Magical Dittle*" published by Cindy Palin

CULTURE & CONTEMPORARY ISSUES | *Sponsored by That's Life! Communications*

- **Winner:** Harold Taylor: Sussex, NB "*Making Writing Work for You*" published by Northern Forest Publishing

LIFE STORIES | *Sponsored by That's Life! Communications*

- **Winner:** Jane Catherine Rozek: Kelowna, BC "*Wilderness Courage*" published by Jane Catherine Rozek
- **Award of Merit:** Robyn Derksen Olfert: Winnipeg, MB "*Invisibly Ill and Living with Hope*" published by Word Alive Press

BOOKS – SPECIALTY BOOKS & POETRYPOETRY | *Sponsored by Drew Keith, Edward Jones Investments*

- **Winner:** Kim LM Longstreet: Winnipeg, MB "*The Sun Neither Rises nor Sets*" published by Friesen Press

SPECIALTY BOOK | *Sponsored by Drew Keith, Edward Jones Investments*

- **Winner:** Deb Elkink: Cypress County, AB "*Vagabond Come Home*" published by Deb Elkink

SPECIALTY AWARDS**BEST BOOK COVER** | *Sponsored by Living Books Inc.*

NOMINEES

- Teresa Arsenault: Sleon Park, PE "*Tales of Ellmoria: Son of Abeilhe*" published by Morning Dove Press. Cover design by Jedida - The Art of Sark
- Karen Autio: Kelowna, BC "*Playdate Surprise*" published by Scholastic. Cover design by Laura Watson
- Johanna Frank: Kitchener, ON "*Here Lyeth*" published by Johanna Frank. Cover design by Damonza
- Jordan Hageman: Stoney Creek, ON "*The Storywriter*" published by Word Alive Press. Cover design by 49 Republic Content Studio
- Terrie Todd: Portage la Prairie, MB "*Even if We Cry*" published by Mountain Brook Ink. Cover design by Lynnette Bonner
- Christina Van Starckenburg: Regina, SK "*Shadows of Memory and Stone*" published by Christina Van Starckenburg. Cover design by GetCovers

WINNER

- Terrie Todd: Portage la Prairie, MB "*Even if We Cry*" published by Mountain Brook Ink. *Cover design by Lynnette Bonner*

**DEBRA FIEGUTH SOCIAL JUSTICE AWARD | Sponsored by HH Communication Services****NOMINEES**

- Karen Autio: Kelowna, BC *“Playdate Surprise”* published by Scholastic
- Steve Bell: Winnipeg, MB *“One Can Hope”*
- Paul Boge: Winnipeg, MB *“Mully Children’s Family Transformations – The Charles Mulli Legacy”* published by Castle Quay Books
- Susan Doherty: Westmount, QC *“Monday Rent Boy”* published by Random House Canada
- Julie Fitz-Gerald: Uxbridge, ON *“The housing crisis: Lack of housing, addiction and mental health are creating the perfect storm”* published by Annex Business Media - Firefighting in Canada Magazine
- Angie Peters: Brampton, ON *“Just Act: We are the Solution to Poverty”* published by Castle Quay Books

WINNER

- Paul Boge: Winnipeg, MB *“Mully Children’s Family Transformations – The Charles Mulli Legacy”* published by Castle Quay Books

HARVEY/MACKEY AWARD | Sponsored by The Mackey Family**NOMINEES**

- Lynn C. Bilton: Brighton, ON *“Peaceful Pastures”* published by Watershed Magazine
- Jamie Munday: Kelowna, BC *“Mission Inversion”* published by Faith Today
- Aimee Patterson: Winnipeg, MB *“Making Room for Inefficiency”* published by Faith Today
- Ty Ragan: Calgary, AB *“Learning From Jesus and the Woman at the Well”* published by Faith Today

WINNER

- Jamie Munday: Kelowna, BC *“Mission Inversion”* published by Faith Today

INDIGENOUS AUTHOR AWARD | Sponsored by Janis Cox**NOMINEES**

- Jonathan Maracle: Tyendinaga Territory, ON *“The Call of the Drum”* published by NAIITS: An Indigenous Learning Community
- Garfield Mark: South Porcupine, ON *“From Turmoil to Peace—A Personal Testimony of God’s Care Over a Lifetime”* published by testimony/Enrich

WINNER

- Garfield Mark: South Porcupine, ON *“From Turmoil to Peace—A Personal Testimony of God’s Care Over a Lifetime”* published by testimony/Enrich



WRITER OF COLOUR AWARD | Sponsored by That's Life! Communications

NOMINEES

- Angela Charles: Burlington, ON *"Hope Relinquished"* published by Word Alive Press
- Sohani Faria: Richmond, BC *"The Turn Around"* published by Guideposts
- Daniel Im: Edmonton, AB *"The Discipleship Opportunity"* published by NavPress
- Shireen Jeejeebhoy: Toronto, ON *"The Soul's Awakening"* published by Shireen Jeejeebhoy

WINNER

- Daniel Im: Edmonton, AB *"The Discipleship Opportunity"* published by NavPress

BEST FICTION BOOK | Sponsored by Jack Taylor

NOMINEES

- Eleanor Bertin: Botha, AB *"Not By Chance"* published by Leaf & Blade Publishing
- Eleanor Bertin: Botha, AB *"Unremarkable Sue"* published by Leaf & Blade Publishing
- Susan Doherty: Westmount, QC *"Monday Rent Boy"* published by Random House Canada
- Deb Elkink: Cypress County, AB *"Vagabond Come Home"* published by Deb Elkink
- Ellen Hooge: Calgary, AB *"Daughters Of Havah Volume One - Matriarchs of Israel"* published by Sparrow House Collective

WINNER

- Susan Doherty: Westmount, QC *"Monday Rent Boy"* published by Random House Canada

BEST NON-FICTION BOOK | Sponsored by "The Immortal Mind: A Neurosurgeon's Case for the Existence of the Soul" by Michael Egnor & Denyse O'Leary

NOMINEES

- Susan Barclay-Hawley: Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON *"Shadow Gifts: Finding Beauty in the Darkness"* published by Susan Barclay-Hawley
- Julie Lane-Gay: Vancouver, BC *"The Riches of Your Grace"* published by InterVarsity Press
- Alastair Sterne: Victoria, BC *"Longing for Joy"* published by InterVarsity Press
- Harold Taylor: Sussex, NB *"Making Writing Work for You"* published by Northern Forest Publishing
- Rebecca Van Noppen: Mountain, ON *"Cultivating Trust—Finding God's Hope and Freedom for Your Finances"* published by FiveArrowsMedia

WINNER

- Alastair Sterne: Victoria, BC *"Longing for Joy"* published by InterVarsity Press



CONGRATULATIONS TO THE WINNERS!

Copies of the 2025 Winner's List will be posted on
our [Media page](#) and [Finalists page](#)

THANK YOU TO OUR 2025 JUDGES

*A heartfelt thank you to our judges, who generously gave their time and expertise to evaluate this year's entries.
With the increase in submissions, your dedication made all the difference. We couldn't do this without you!*

Sara Anderson
Ngozi Anokwu
Carolyn Arends
Brian Austin
Kathy Berklund-Pagé
Paul Boge
Sallyanne Calver
Kim Cechetto
Amanda de Santis
Lynn Dove
Deb Elkink
Heather Fledderus
Carol Ford
Jared Friesen
Judy Gomoll

Ann Griffiths
Kene Jackson
Ginny Jaques
Brenda Jones
Victoria Jurgens
Doug Koop
Dr. Willy Kotiuga
Lucy Kraemer
Raymond Douglas Lett
Les Lindquist
Marion Mahar
Rose McCormick Brandon
Dr. Don Moore
Corinne Mordaunt
Murray Pura

Marina Rietema
Annabel Robinson
Gail Sattler
Rose Scott
Robert Thiessen
Gladys Thompson
Laura Tiessen
Terrie Todd
Ben Volman
Roslyn Weisgerber
Martin Whitbread
Kathleen Wiens
Carmen Wittmeier
Brenda J. Wood
Alan Yoshioka

THANK YOU TO OUR 2025 VOLUNTEERS

We are deeply grateful to our volunteers who have stepped in to help us through tight timelines this year. Your willingness to serve behind the scenes makes the Awards Celebration possible.

Thank you: Sara Davison, Janice Keats, Cindy Palin, Heather Stuart, and Hilda Van Gysse!



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A heartfelt thank you to our sponsors whose contributions make The Word Awards possible. Your support provides the foundation to reward excellence, cover logistical needs, and offer recognition to Christian writers across Canada. Thank you for being part of making this celebration happen.

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