THE WORD AWARDS 2026

October 10, 2026

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Word Guild Celebrates Excellence in Canadian Christian Writing at 38th Annual Awards

MARKHAM, ON — The Word Guild proudly hosted its 38th annual awards ceremony on Saturday, October 3, 2026. This virtual event recognized both unpublished pieces and works published in 2025 for both Christian and general market audiences. Entrants from across Canada competed in more than 50 categories, showcasing the breadth and depth of diverse talent within the Canadian literary community.

Co-hosts **Heather Stuart** and **Dagmar Morgan-Sinclair** navigated the evening to celebrate writing talent by Christians in Canada. The evening served to honour, celebrate, and inspire a variety of writing by the Christian community across the country.

Increase in Poetry Submissions Highlights Diversity Among Christian Talent
Again this year, The Word Awards saw a significant number of submissions, especially in the poetry classes. The focus on poetry was not just seen among young writers but was also evident in other categories, reminding us that Christian Canadian writers have a variety of genres at their fingertips to share their messaging and connect with audiences. Co-host **Morgan-Sinclair**, a published poet, musician, and performer delighted the audience with narrations of winning poems throughout the evening. The variety of writing seen at this year's awards reflects a diverse writing culture from across Canada.

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

- **Best Book Cover**: Amanda Wright — *Darkfell* | Publisher: Quill & Flame Publishers, Cover design by Ashley Bustamante
- **Debra Fieguth Social Justice Award**: Deidre Galbraith — *NITANIS: The Story of Mary Greyeyes / First Indigenous Woman in the Canadian Armed Forces* | Publisher: Sparrow House Collective
- **Harvey/Mackey Journalism Award**: Jon Corbin — *Hip Hop Was Always Part of the Story* | Publisher: Faith Today
- **Indigenous Author Award**: Howard Jolly for *An Indigenous Reflection on the New Testament* | Publisher: Sparrow House Collective

- **Writer of Colour Award**: Vilma Blenman for *Brown Eyes Watching: Reflections of a Black Canadian Poet*
- **Castle Quay Best New Canadian Manuscript Award**: Ruth Kerr for *Fierce.* 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.

- **Best Fiction Book: Amanda Wright for *Darkfell* | Publisher: Quill & Flame Publishers.**

- **Best Non-Fiction Book**: **J. D. Lyonhart for *The Journey of God: Christianity in Six Movements* | Publisher: InterVarsity Press**

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, in his opening remarks.

David Kitz, Chair of the Board of The Word Guild shared, “It is my privilege to welcome you to this time that we can spent together honouring the amazing writers we have in this country. Especially, I want to spend to make mention of some of the wonderful poets… we’ve had a good number of entries in that area. … We are greatly blessed to have some really amazing, very talented writers. And I also want to express my appreciation for the judges who worked so hard to get this evening ready and read these amazing pieces of work.”

Les Lindquist, Treasurer at The Word Guild, shares “In the movie Chariots of Fire, Eric Liddel says ‘And when I run, I feel His pleasure.’ I think many of us, as writers, could tweak that sentence: ‘And when I write, I feel His pleasure.’ Colossians 3:23 says ‘Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord.’ We celebrate today writers who worked at their writing with all their heart. I pray that as we do the hard work of writing, we will also feel His pleasure.”

Congratulations to The Word Award winners of 2026!

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 2026 Word Awards is available at https://thewordguild.com/media-centre/.

THE WORD AWARDS 2026

WINNERS LIST

Honouring the Best of Canadian Christian Writing from 2025

UNPUBLISHED WORKS - FRESH INK

Fresh Ink - High School — Manuscript - First 3 Chapters

WINNER: Mikayla Traver • Lowbanks, ON — *Ally of Shadows*

Fresh Ink - High School — Poetry

WINNER: Allison Vivanco • Surrey, BC — *Patmos in the Rain*

Fresh Ink - University — Manuscript - First 3 Chapters

WINNER: Ruth Ann Bos • Ancaster, ON — *Vision*

Fresh Ink - University — Non-Fiction Piece

WINNER: Juliana vanPopta • Hamilton, ON — *Wet Sneakers*

Fresh Ink - University — Poetry

WINNER: Monica Bartsch • Tillsonburg, ON — *They Came For Us In the Night*

Fresh Ink - University — Short Story (1500 words or less)

WINNER: Anna Harris • Ancaster, ON — *Bruise-coloured*

AWARD OF MERIT Jerica Corey • Yarmouth, NS — *Into Light*

UNPUBLISHED WORKS - IN THE BEGINNING

In the Beginning — Manuscript - First 3 Chapters

WINNER: Tom McLagan • Markham, ON — *Serving God Together: Reclaiming God's Vision for Women in Leadership*

In the Beginning — Non-Fiction piece

WINNER: Julie Stautland • Niagara, ON — *Let Your Light Sparkle - 31 Days of God's Truth to Overcome Fear, Shame and Self-Doubt*

AWARD OF MERIT: William Ian Walker • Hamilton, ON — *Creativity: A Divine Current Through My Life*

In the Beginning — Poetry

WINNER: Jazmine Lawrence • Beaver Bank, NS — *Lord, Teach Us to Pray*

In the Beginning — Short Story (1500 words or less)

WINNER: Jendaya [Jenna] Sanderson • Stouffville, ON — *The Sacrifice*

CASTLE QUAY BEST NEW CANADIAN MANUSCRIPT

WINNER: Ruth A. Kerr • Stettler, AB — *Fierce*

CHRISTIAN MARKET – PUBLISHED

CHRISTIAN ARTICLE/SHORT PIECE

Christian Article/Short Piece — Blog - Personal

WINNER: Dr. Paul E. Hughes • Langley, BC — *Five Men Learning to Love Well* | Publisher: Faith Today

Christian Article/Short Piece — Blog - Topical

TIE Connie Leung Nelson • Edmonton, AB — *How The Gospel Answers Shame in College Students* | Publisher: The Gospel Coalition

TIE Matthew Todd • Coquitlam, BC — *Handing On the Faith to the Next Generation* | Publisher: Faith Today

AWARD OF MERIT Alice Plug-Buist • Hamilton, ON — *Clearing Muck for Our Neighbours* | Publisher: Faith Today

Christian Article/Short Piece — Column - Single

WINNER: Willy Kotiuga • Pointe-Claire, QC — *Artificial Intelligence: Servant, Not Substitute* | Publisher: Faith Today

Christian Article/Short Piece — Inspirational/Devotional

WINNER: Tricia Gibb Lane • Bright's Grove, ON — *What Would I Say to My Younger Self?: Lessons from the Journey as a Female Church Pastor* | Publisher: testimony/Enrich

AWARD OF MERIT: Terrie Todd • Portage la Prairie, MB — *Meeting Mr. Miki* | Publisher: Guideposts

Christian Article/Short Piece — Long Feature

WINNER: Jon Corbin • Bedford, NS — *Hip Hop Was Always Part of the Story* | Publisher: Faith Today

Christian Article/Short Piece — Personal Experience

WINNER: Patti Miller • Montreal, QC — *Pastoring Through Brokenness* | Publisher: testimony/Enrich

Christian Article/Short Piece — Personal Opinion

WINNER: Floyd A. Brobbel • Oakville, ON — *This Year is Coming to an End* | Publisher: Voice of the Martyrs Canada

AWARD OF MERIT: Duane Henry • Ancaster, ON — *Ham's Children: More Than Slaves* | Publisher: testimony/Enrich

Christian Article/Short Piece — Poetry

WINNER: Lindsey Gallant • Wheatley River, PE — *We Are All Mary* | Publisher: The Habit Portfolio

Christian Article/Short Piece — Profile/Human Interest

WINNER: René Lussier • Saint-Hyacinthe, QC — *Michel Charbonneau: Paying Homage to a True Christian Hero* | Publisher: testimony/Enrich

Christian Article/Short Piece — Song Lyrics

WINNER: Christopher Mackness • Hamilton, ON — *THE CRY (STORY)* | Publisher: C-DOT (Independent Music Artist)

CHRISTIAN MARKET – BOOKS

Christian Fiction — Children

WINNER: Janet Surette • Barrie, ON — *The Maiden & The Wall* | Publisher: Tellwell Publishing, Illustrations by Rylie Prentice, Cover designed by Janet Surette & Rylie Prentice

AWARD OF MERIT: Bridget Hagstrom • Leduc, AB — *Princess Annelissa* | Publisher: FiveArrowsMedia Inc, Illustration by Melissa Baker Nguyen, Cover designed by FiveArrowsMedia Inc.

Christian Fiction — Middle Grade

WINNER: Susan Reimer • Cochrane, ON — *The Space Between Us* | Publisher: Chicken Scratch Books

Christian Fiction — Young Adult

WINNER: Jil Koller • Oro Medonte, ON — *Heart of a Bowman* | Publisher: Mountain Brook Ink

Christian Fiction — Contemporary

WINNER: Robert Montgomery • Gatineau, QC — *Ryan's War* | Publisher: Word Alive Press

Christian Fiction — Historical

WINNER: Jack A. Taylor • Maple Ridge, BC — *Turning West (Book 3 Prince of Persia Series)* | Publisher: Word Alive Press

AWARD OF MERIT Helena Smrcek • Brantford, ON — *A Season of Forever* | Publisher: Fab Four Press

Christian Fiction — Novella

WINNER: Melanie Stevenson • Cambridge, ON — *Falling for You (from the 'I Heard the Bells' Christmas anthology)* | Publisher: Fab Four Press

Christian Fiction — Romance

WINNER: Pattie Janzen • Martensville, SK — *You Are Amadeus* | Publisher: PDJ Publishing

Christian Fiction — Speculative

WINNER: Amanda Wright • Summerland, BC — *Darkfell* | Publisher: Quill & Flame Publishers

Christian Fiction — Stories (under 10,000 words)

WINNER: Eleanor Bertin • Botha, AB — *Call Me Birdie* | Publisher: Leaf & Blade Publishing

AWARD OF MERIT: Terrie Todd • Portage la Prairie, MB — *Final Critique* | Publisher: FellowScript Magazine

Christian Fiction — Suspense

WINNER: Blossom Turner • Lake Country, BC — *Maranatha The Victory Battle (Book 3 in the Victory Series)* | Publisher: TurnStyle Books

AWARD OF MERIT: Laura Thomas • West Kelowna, BC — *The Final Word* | Publisher: Mountain Brook Ink

Christian Non-Fiction — Academic

WINNER: J. D. Lyonhart • Jamestown, ND — *The Journey of God: Christianity in Six Movements* | Publisher: InterVarsity Press, Illustrations by

Christian Non-Fiction — Apologetics/Evangelism

WINNER: Kiri Jane Erb • Comox, BC — *Love, War and The Mess In Between* | Publisher: Wipf and Stock Publishers

Christian Non-Fiction — Biblical Studies

WINNER: Janet Surette • Barrie, ON — *Every Good Thing: A Glory Story of Gospel Partnership* | Publisher: Admiration Books

Christian Non-Fiction — Children

WINNER: Vickram Bachan • Toronto, ON — *The Donkey's Wish* | Publisher: Word Alive Press

Christian Non-Fiction — Christian Living - Personal Growth or Inspirational

WINNER: Meta Kool • St Thomas, ON — *Born to Stand Out* | Publisher: FiveArrowsMedia Inc.

Christian Non-Fiction — Culture & Contemporary Issues

WINNER: Jane Watrich • Regina, SK & Nellie O'Hara • Burlington, ON — *Sound the Alarm* | Publisher: FiveArrowsMedia Inc.

Christian Non-Fiction — Devotional/Inspirational

WINNER: Ann Griffiths • Abbotsford, BC — *God, I'm Broken: Finding Hope and Comfort in Your Grief Journey* | Publisher: Redemption Press

Christian Non-Fiction — Life Stories/Memoir/Autobiography

WINNER: Gregory Musselman • St. Albert, AB — *From the Sidelines to the FrontLines* | Publisher: Genesis Publishing Group

AWARD OF MERIT: Paul H. Boge • East St. Paul, MB — *Ordinary People, Extraordinary God: The Story of Noel Isaacs and the Himalayan Mountain People* | Publisher: RFI Publishing

GENERAL MARKET – PUBLISHED

GENERAL ARTICLE/SHORT PIECE

General Article/Short Piece — Long Feature

WINNER: Lynn C. Bilton • Brighton, ON — *Celebrating Extraordinary Canadians* | Publisher: Watershed Magazine

General Article/Short Piece — Personal Experience

WINNER: Allison Lynn Flemming • St. Catharines, ON — *The Meal That Made Me Brave* | Publisher: Chicken Soup for the Soul

GENERAL MARKET – BOOKS

General Fiction — Children

WINNER: Lori Taetz • Kelowna, BC — *Grandma and the Internet* | Publisher: Friesen Press, Illustrations by Pia Reeves

General Fiction — Contemporary

WINNER: Graeme Connell • Calgary, AB — *Blu, amid blooms and branches*

General Fiction — Historical

WINNER: Jack A. Taylor • Maple Ridge, BC — *The Betrayal* | Publisher: Friesen Press

General Fiction — Middle Grade

WINNER: Todd Anderson • Kanata, ON — *Sugar, Spice and Everything Nice*

General Fiction — Young Adult

WINNER: Kyrie Wang • Montreal, QC — *Traitor's Heart (Enemy's Keeper Book 2)*

General Non-Fiction — Children

WINNER: Bill Strom • Abbotsford, BC — *Professor Kipper Kidd Talks Phone-y Baloney* | Publisher: Integratio Press

General Non-Fiction — Culture & Contemporary Issues

WINNER: Mark Scott • Franklin, MA — *The Beauty of Souls Aesthetic Encounters with Marilynne Robinson* | Publisher: Fortress Press

General Non-Fiction — Life Stories

WINNER: Linda Brierly • Clearwater, BC — *Edge of the Ledge, A Memoir of Adventures Lived and Lessons Learned* | Publisher: Friesen Press

Poetry Book

WINNER: D.S. Martin • Komoka, ON — *The Role of the Moon* | Publisher: Paraclete Press

Specialty Book

WINNER: Deidre Galbraith • Calgary, AB — *NITANIS The Story of Mary Greyeyes / First Indigenous Woman in the Canadian Armed Forces* | Publisher: Sparrow House Collective

Script

WINNER: Lynn C. Bilton • Brighton, ON — *Dark Horse*

SPECIALTY AWARDS

Harvey/Mackey Journalist Award

SHORTLIST

Dr. Paul E. Hughes • Langley, BC — *Five Men Learning to Love Well* | Publisher: Faith Today

Alice Plug-Buist • Hamilton, ON — *Clearing Muck for Our Neighbours* | Publisher: Faith Today

Jon Corbin • Bedford, NS — *Hip Hop Was Always Part of the Story* | Publisher: Faith Today

Lynn C. Bilton • Brighton, ON — *Celebrating Extraordinary Canadians* | Publisher: Watershed Magazine

WINNER: Jon Corbin • Bedford, NS — *Hip Hop Was Always Part of the Story* | Publisher: Faith Today

Debra Fieguth Social Justice Award

SHORTLIST

Jon Corbin • Bedford, NS — *Hip Hop Was Always Part of the Story* | Publisher: Faith Today

Floyd A. Brobbel • Oakville, ON — *This Year is Coming to an End* | Publisher: Voice of the Martyrs Canada

Larry Willard • Little Britain, ON & Chuck Stephens • Newmarket, ON — *Is That True? Discerning Truth in an Age of Deception* | Publisher: Castle Quay Books

Gregory Musselman • St. Albert, AB — *From the Sidelines to the FrontLines* | Publisher: Genesis Publishing Group

Vilma Blenman • Pickering, ON — *Brown Eyes Watching: Reflections of a Black Canadian Poet*

Deidre Galbraith • Calgary, AB — *NITANIS: The Story of Mary Greyeyes / First Indigenous Woman in the Canadian Armed Forces* | Publisher: Sparrow House Collective

WINNER: Deidre Galbraith • Calgary, AB — *NITANIS: The Story of Mary Greyeyes / First Indigenous Woman in the Canadian Armed Forces* | Publisher: Sparrow House Collective

Indigenous Writer Award

SHORTLIST

Kene Jackson • Acme, AB — *Tuff Dog Telecaster* | Publisher: Intertribal Life

Daniel Zacharias • Wolfville, NS & Christopher Hoklotubbe • Lisbon, IA — *Reading the Bible on Turtle Island: An Invitation to North American Indigenous Interpretation* | Publisher: InterVarsity Press

Nikki T. White • Langley, BC — *A Curious Art* | Publisher: Word Alive Press

Howard Jolly • Niverville, MB — *An Indigenous Reflection on the New Testament* | Publisher: Sparrow House Collective

WINNER: Howard Jolly • Niverville, MB — *An Indigenous Reflection on the New Testament* | Publisher: Sparrow House Collective

Writer of Colour Award

SHORTLIST

Connie Leung Nelson • Edmonton, AB — *The Gift of the Unexpected in Parenting* | Publisher: Rooted Ministry

Connie Leung Nelson • Edmonton, AB — *How The Gospel Answers Shame in College Students* | Publisher: The Gospel Coalition

Jon Corbin • Bedford, NS — *Hip Hop Was Always Part of the Story* | Publisher: Faith Today

Duane Henry • Ancaster, ON — *Ham's Children: More Than Slaves* | Publisher: testimony/Enrich

Kyrie Wang • Montreal, QC — *Traitor's Heart (Enemy's Keeper Book 2)*

Vilma Blenman • Pickering, ON — *Brown Eyes Watching: Reflections of a Black Canadian Poet*

WINNER: Vilma Blenman • Pickering, ON — *Brown Eyes Watching: Reflections of a Black Canadian Poet*

Best Fiction Book

SHORTLIST

Susan Reimer • Cochrane, ON — *The Space Between Us* | Publisher: Chicken Scratch Books

Helena Smrcek • Brantford, ON — *A Season of Forever* | Publisher: Fab Four Press

Melanie Stevenson • Cambridge, ON — *Falling for You (from the 'I Heard the Bells' Christmas anthology)* | Publisher: Fab Four Press

Jack A. Taylor • Maple Ridge, BC — *Turning West (Book 3 Prince of Persia Series)* | Publisher: Word Alive Press

Amanda Wright • Summerland, BC — *Darkfell* | Publisher: Quill & Flame Publishers

WINNER: Amanda Wright • Summerland, BC — *Darkfell* | Publisher: Quill & Flame Publishers

AWARD OF MERIT: Susan Reimer • Cochrane, ON — *The Space Between Us* | Publisher: Chicken Scratch Books

Best Non-Fiction Book

SHORTLIST

Vilma Blenman • Pickering, ON — *Brown Eyes Watching: Reflections of a Black Canadian Poet*

Mark Glanville • Vancouver, BC — *Preaching in a New Key: Crafting Expository Sermons in Post-Christian Communities* | Publisher: InterVarsity Press

Meta Kool • St Thomas, ON — *Born to Stand Out* | Publisher: FiveArrowsMedia Inc.

J. D. Lyonhart • Jamestown, ND — *The Journey of God: Christianity in Six Movements* | Publisher: InterVarsity Press

D.S. Martin • Komoka, ON — *The Role of the Moon* | Publisher: Paraclete Press

Jane Watrich • Regina, SK & Nellie O'Hara • Burlington, ON — *Sound the Alarm* | Publisher: FiveArrowsMedia Inc.

WINNER: J. D. Lyonhart • Jamestown, ND — *The Journey of God: Christianity in Six Movements* | Publisher: InterVarsity Press

Best Book Cover

SHORTLIST

Johanna Frank • Kitchener, ON — The Voice I Couldn't Ignore | Publisher: Marrow Publishing, Cover design by Damonza

Paige Lennox • Kelowna, BC — The Carpenter’s List - How One Man’s Obedience Became a Church Without Walls

Terrie Todd • Portage la Prairie, MB — *Even If I Perish* | Publisher: Mountain Brook Ink, Cover design by Lynnette Bonner

Blossom Turner • Lake Country, BC — *Mara The Unseen Battle* | Publisher: TurnStyle Books, Cover design by Louis David

Nikki T. White • Langley, BC — *A Curious Art* | Publisher: Word Alive Press

Amanda Wright • Summerland, BC — *Darkfell* | Publisher: Quill & Flame Publishers, Cover design by Ashley Bustamante

WINNER: Amanda Wright • Summerland, BC — *Darkfell* | Publisher: Quill & Flame Publishers, Cover design by Ashley Bustamante

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE WINNERS!

Copies of the 2026 Winner's List will be posted on
our Media page and Finalists page

THANK YOU TO OUR 2026 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!

Steve Almond
Sara Anderson
Marianne Tiessen Bell
Dorothy Bentley
Kathy Berklund
Eleanor Bertin
Vilma Blenman
Sallyanne Calver
Sue Carlisle
Kimberley Cechetto
Angela Charles
Amanda De Santis
Susan Doherty
Kim Driedger
Heather Fledderus
Allison Lynn Flemming
Brad Gambill
Doug Harink
Dr. Ed Hird
Bev Hopwood
Ginny Jaques
Victoria Jurgens
Willy Kotiuga
Lucy Pavia Kraemer
Marcia Laycock
Doug Lett
Rachelle Luk
Marion Mahar
Ron James Mahler
Rose McCormick
Dagmar Morgan-Sinclair
Naomi Pattison-Williams
Cheryl Peters-Ball
Denise Ramsey
Susan Reimer
Marina Rietema
Annabel Robinson
Rose Scott
Lana Shupe
Dr. Peter Stiles
Christie Thomas
Terrie Todd
Blossom Turner
Uzoma Uponi
Ben Volman
Roslyn Weisgerber
Denise Wilson
Alan Yoshioka

THANK YOU TO OUR 2026 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, SUPPORTERS!

A heartfelt thank you to our supporters whose contributions make The Word Awards possible. Your donation provides the foundation to reward excellence, cover logistical needs, and offer recognition to Christian writers across Canada. Thank you helping make this celebration happen.

Discover more about our supporters by visiting their websites below:

Anonymous Donors
Neil Bramble
Paul Boge
Castle Quay Books
David Kitz Productions
Janis Cox
Joel Crawford
Susan Doherty
Faith Today
Carol Ford
Dana Friesen
HH Communication Services
House of James
Laugh and Learn Inc.
Light Magazine
Living Books Inc.
The Mackey Family
Marguerite Cummings
Meta Kool
MurderWillOut Imprint
Denyse O'Leary
Redeemer University
Jack Taylor
That's Life! Communications
Carolyn Wilker
Word Alive Press

SUPPORT THE 2027 AWARDS

Please consider donating to the 2027 Word Awards. With your assistance we are able to support Christian writers across Canada. To become a supporter, please email us at: awards@thewordguild.com.