



**NOVEMBER
2025**

FRESH INK

**INLAND EMPIRE
CALIFORNIA
WRITERS
CLUB**

CONTACT THE *board*

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Celebrating Our Momentum – and Inviting You to Join In!

Let's applaud our amazing board for their creativity and dedication!

October was packed – a mini-retreat, a guest presentation, and a last-minute booth at Riverside's first Book Festival. Whew! Our calendar is full and thriving:

- **November:** We welcome a presentation by author Jackie Cano and the art of writing fiction for children.
- **December:** Our festive Holiday Social—a time to relax together.
- **January:** Celebrating Members Who Publish: our Annual Authors' Panel.

We're planning presentations and ideas well into 2026. Even with our Program Chair position shared among board members for years, the results speak for themselves—many hands truly make light work. A heartfelt thank you to everyone on the board contributing:

- **Ben Alirez**—for collecting renewals from 35 members and warmly greeting potential new members every month.
- **Constance Cassinelli**, steady and skilled, keeping our critique group thriving.
- **Anaïs Hamel**, our Fresh Ink editor creating a beautiful, signature newsletter design.
- **Cynthia DeMone**, keeping our community connected through Facebook and Meetup.
- **Shirley Timura**, adding hospitality and welcome to our club.

Special note about **Sam Nichols**. After over a decade of dedicated service, he will be stepping down from the board. We're deeply grateful for his many contributions and the leadership he's shown. Let's review our officer list from MRMS, our membership database.



Inland Empire Branch Officers & Mailing Lists

You are logged on as: JKohnen
Officers & Lists

Office	Branch
President	204030 - Judy Kohnen
Vice Pres.	204134 - Ben Alirez
Treasurer	204038 - Samuel Nichols
Secretary	204134 - Ben Alirez
Membership Ch.	204134 - Ben Alirez
Program Ch.	
Editor	204184 - Anais Hamel
Webmaster	204038 - Samuel Nichols
Publicity Ch.	204132 - Cynthia DeMone
Hospitality Ch.	204098 - Shirley Timura
Mem. At Large	
C. B. Rep	204038 - Samuel Nichols
Sys. Adm.	204030 - Judy Kohnen
Pre-Session	
Historian	
NorCal/SoCal Rep	204038 - Samuel Nichols
Critique. Gp. Coord.	204085 - Constance Cassinelli
Adv & Promo Ch.	

Sam gifted me with a solid team when I took over the role of President—but he continued to shoulder a large load. When our webmaster and secretary stepped down, their jobs were assumed by Ben and Sam. Four full positions for Sam! That's a lot of work. It's not surprising, really, that he will step down from the board.

It's normal to cycle through board positions but it is not healthy to overload one person. Moving forward, I invite you all to consider these open positions, while Sam is available to help with training. We need a **Treasurer, Webmaster, Central board Rep/SoCal rep, Program Chair** and a **Secretary**. Sam can help train new volunteers—so it's the perfect time to get involved.

Let's keep our branch strong, creative, and connected—together! ✨

Thankful for your participation,

Judy Conibear Kohnen

EDITOR'S NOTE

This issue was edited using
Canva



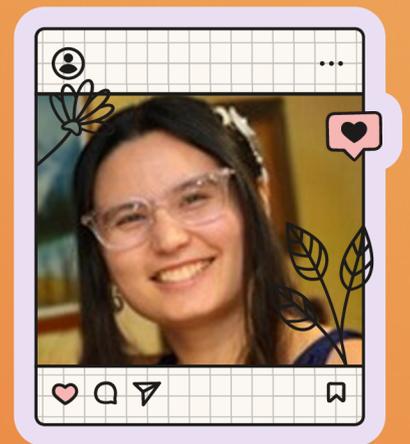
Hello, readers,

Autumn is in full swing in California bringing its usual mix of crisp mornings, warm afternoons, unpredictable temperature swings—and, unfortunately, a rise in seasonal illnesses. I've been dealing with a stubborn case of bronchitis these past three weeks, but thankfully it didn't stop me from working on this issue. Spending time on the newsletter was fun, and I'm grateful to our wonderful writers whose stories brightened my days while I stayed home.

I really enjoyed putting this issue together. I focused on warm, cozy fall colors and had fun sprinkling Canva's beautiful fallen-leaf graphics throughout the newsletter to create a whimsical feel.

The theme for November is gathering. This month brings holidays like Veterans Day and Thanksgiving, giving us opportunities to gather and connect with friends and family. In these times, when we are more connected than ever online yet often feel more isolated, it's especially important to cherish moments with the people we care about.

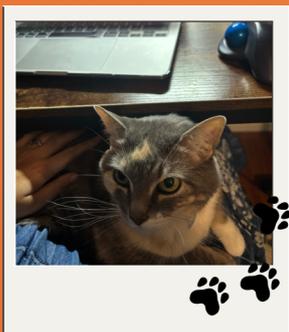
Our writers have created beautiful stories that reflect this theme, and I hope you enjoy them as much as I did. Wishing you all a joyful holiday season with your loved ones!



@globetrotteuse99

Ink to page, tales unveiled.

Anaïs Hamel



Bonus: Meet our 2nd Assistant!

Say hello to our second editor assistant, Coco! While his presence is a bit quieter compared to Litchi, Coco plays an important role—keeping Litchi on her toes and gently nudging for a little extra attention. He may be subtle, but he makes sure every task gets noticed!



Saturday, November 22, 2025, at 10:10 am
 Ovitt Family Library,
 215 E C St, Ontario, CA 91764



The Journey of a Multi-passionate Children's Book Author
by Jackie Cano



About the Author

Jackie Cano is many things: Mom, military spouse, craft maker, mental health advocate, social media content creator, and children's book author. Be prepared for some serious inspiration as Jackie Cano takes us deep into the world of writing fiction for children. This is an opportunity to learn from someone who has mastered the art of crafting stories for young readers and the inspiration behind them.

As a woman who has studied psychology, she believes children's books rooted in real-life values aren't just entertaining, they're healing when they share principles like resilience, confidence, and connection.

Discover what it means to never stop learning, creating, or dreaming.

OCTOBER 2025 MEETING
WHAT'S COMING UP



SEPTEMBER 2025 MEETING REVIEW

Self-Editing: When 'The End' is only 'The Beginning' by Ben Alirez

Saturday, September 27, 2025, at 10:00 a.m.
Claremont Friends Meeting House
727 W. Harrison Ave., Claremont, CA 91711

This day served as the annual Fall Retreat for the Inland Empire California Writers Club (IECWC), which was held at the Claremont Friends Meeting House in—you guessed it—lovely Claremont, the 'City of Trees and Ph.D's,' thanks to its many higher-learning institutions.

As venues go, Claremont Friends has been a club favorite the last several years and it never fails to deliver. A few people arrived early to set-up shop, including Carolina, Ben Alirez's wife. As she had during the 2023 retreat, she was there to check people in at the registration table, providing them with a name tag and a free raffle ticket. Even the club's banner hung proudly from the table. Despite being an event dedicated to IECWC members, non-members were also encouraged to attend, a ten-dollar fee the only stipulation. Sam Nichols and his trusted technical support skills turned the venue's worship room into a meeting room, complete with computer station, sound mic, projector and screen, while President Judy Kohlen, Critique Group Leader Constance Cassinelli, and longtime members Sue Andrews and Ann Casas organized the food tables and arranged place settings for the lunch break.

Once the clock struck ten, attendees were gathered in a large room and separated into two columns. The purpose? A round of speed introductions, the brainchild of President Judy Kohlen. Inspired in part by the speed dating concept, its purpose was to allow individuals the one-on-one opportunity to get to know the other participants up close and personal, including present projects, writing goals, and more. Judy monitored the activity and kept a timer to keep it moving. The banter was lively, wildly entertaining, and over before you knew it.

By 10:20 a.m., Judy gave her announcements, which included the Riverside Book Festival, a first-time event that the IECWC would be participating in. With a booth secured for the purpose of selling books and networking, interested volunteers were being sought to work shifts. Minutes later, I was introducing our guest speaker Kristen Chavez Bennett. As I explained to the audience, I completed a novel earlier in the year. Resources on self-editing lined my shelves, but few were specific to the task of creative writing where nuances like inner dialogue, foreign languages, and slang terms were to be considered. After some effort I stumbled upon Articulate Editing Services, owned and operated by our special guest. Besides an informative blog, she offered a *Fiction Style Guidebook* via her website. It was a resource that proved beneficial during the final stages of my project. And with that, Kristen took the stage and regaled us with her PowerPoint presentation.

With several years of professional editing to her credit, Kristen shared how much she enjoys working with first-time writers. To get the crowd participation going, she passed around a writing exercise she called, "Comma Sense and Sensibility." The group was allowed several minutes to complete the six questions, then our special guest went over an attached answer key. The little lesson was quite enlightening.

The slide show began in earnest again with topics like, "Why learn to self-edit?" and "Editing vs. Writing," or "Levels of Editing." We learned that even the professional editing services from established publishing houses see a five percent error rate in manuscripts, which is considered an acceptable level. The presenter informed us that an editor is simply a professional reader and how we might, as writers, shift our mindsets from writing to editing. Also, how much time we should allow ourselves when switching roles. Then there was advice on methods of review such as hardcopy, changing up fonts, reading aloud, or listening to audio playbacks. Even altering our setting. We learned the differences between proofreading, big picture editing (or developmental editing), line editing (or sentence level reading), and copyediting.

As part of the same quiz and answer key handout, the invited speaker provided the audience with her recommended book list for big picture editing, line editing, and copyediting categories.

The visiting lecturer also provided a little known, but invaluable resource: a group chat feature that Facebook offers called, "Ask a Book Editor." The advice being shared is direct from industry professionals.

In the closing minutes of her talk, Kristen fielded questions from the audience, adding more insight into her profession. And then it was raffle time. Sam and Denise Nichols graciously donated a few leather-bound notebooks. And I was able to provide a hard copy of Kristen's *Fiction Style Guidebook*, which was won by a visitor.

A few club members then made their way to the lobby where they had books displayed for purchase or inquiries, like Constance Cassinelli and Scott Skipper.

When the clock struck twelve, it was time for food and camaraderie. Decorated picnic tables and chairs awaited. Volunteer John Cassinelli had previously picked up party platters from nearby Stater Bros. And all manner of food had been donated like potato salad, chips and guacamole, banana bread, cookies, pies and so much more. The club also provided bottled waters, energy drinks, and coffee. Even the weather cooperated with modest temperatures in the low 80s.

The final attendance saw approximately thirty-two people, nearly half non-members. To borrow the title from Miss Stevie Smith and her 1937 book of poems, "A good time was had by all."



Benefits of IECWC MEMBERSHIP

- ALL AGES are welcome!
- Entrance into monthly meetings
 - (in-person or remotely through Zoom)
- Access to monthly speakers on topics related to the craft
- Exposure & practice by submitting to our monthly literary newsletter, FRESH INK
- Network with other club members
 - (various levels of expertise, mentors)
- Participation in Critique Groups
 - (in-person or remotely through Zoom)
- Your OWN PAGE on our Club website at no additional cost
 - Highlight your bio, photo, website, social media, and published books
- Opportunities to serve on the board or on committees of our branch
- Camaraderie among other writers at all levels, all genres, and all ages!
- Partake, volunteer, and/or help plan our Spring and Fall Conferences which are provided at little (or sometimes no) cost to our members
- Annual opportunity to showcase your work at Open Mic events.
- Annual opportunity, each January, to attend/appear on our Panel of Authors
 - Members who were published the year before
 - Learn/share advice on the publication process, ask/answer questions, and buy/sell your books on site
- Annual opportunity to submit, read, and assist with judging the competitive Statewide CWC Literary Review, with readership of about 2,000 members and their readers and associates
- Simultaneous Co-Membership into California Writers Club
 - Our state-level parent organization at www.calwriters.org, with additional volunteer opportunities

- Read/advertise in the Tri-Annual CWC Bulletin available online, free of charge
 - Access to news from the other CWC Branches throughout California, gaining perspective about other serious, mostly published, writers, editors, Web designers, graphics experts, etc.
- Potential for your writing to be chosen to be displayed in the Southern California Writers Showcase at www.socalwritersshowcase.com
- A wonderful addition to your curriculum vitae or resume!
- Access to the monthly IECWC Blind Review Team
- Utilize our FACEBOOK PAGE to get your works word out to the public interested in writing

JOIN or RENEW at:

<https://iecwc.com/membership-meetings/>

Active
\$65

Supporting
\$65

Student
\$15
ages 8-22

Renewal of Membership
\$45

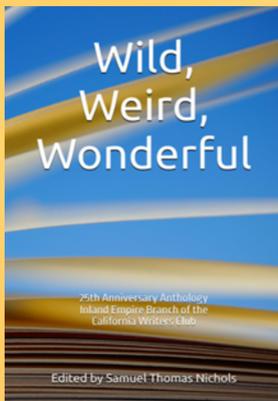
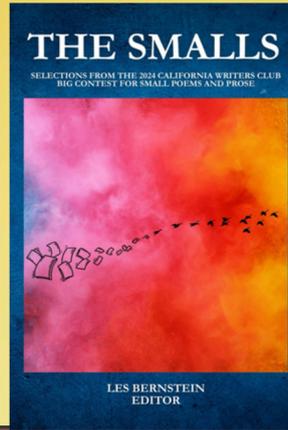
Renewal deadline September 30.
On October 1, CWC shall drop all delinquent members from the rolls.
If dropped, you must pay the new \$65 member enrollment fees.

C W C

THE SMALLS

The Smalls includes selections from the California Writers Club 2024 "Big Contest for Small Poems and Prose." This is a vibrant collection of unique voices chosen from the contest entries.

<https://a.co/d/45iqsdm>



Wild, Weird, Wonderful: 25th Anniversary Anthology Inland Empire Branch of the California Writers Club

<https://a.co/d/0SVxuPT>

This collection includes short stories, poetry, memoir, nonfiction, memoir, original drawings and photographs, and one novelette entitled *Murder in Huckleberry Heights*.

This anthology contains the varietal work of eighteen members of the Inland Empire Branch with several genres being represented.

Vision & Verse: A Fusion of Art, Photography, Prose and Poetry

The multi-talented artists and writers featured within these pages have come together to create a dialogue between their respective mediums. This collection showcases the beauty of visual art married with the magic of the written word.

<https://a.co/d/2zu0Afx>



BO OK S

KUDOS KORNER

Congratulation to **Jackie Phillips** for writing the chapter "*Defying Naysayers, Fueling My Why by Proving Them Wrong.*" in the Anthology "*What's Your Why?*"



Claremont Courier

A LOCAL NONPROFIT NEWSROOM

EAGLE SCOUT PROJECTS: LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON



Congratulations to **Constance Cassinelli** for publishing her article "*Eagle Scout Projects: Like Father, Like Son.*" in the Claremont Courier Newsletter on October 4th

<https://claremont-courier.com/schools/eagle-scout-projects-like-father-like-son-85307/>

KUDOS KORNER

Congratulations to **Diosa Xochiquetzalcóatl** for their outstanding community engagement!

On **October 3**, they served as a panelist at the *LEAD Summit* at Cal State San Bernardino. From **October 20–24**, they participated virtually in the *XVIII Festival Internacional Poetas Migrantes in San Luis Río Colorado, Sonora, Mexico*. On **October 25**, they were a featured poet at *Xicanas for Tierra y Libertad* and also a curator for *Brilliant Bilinguals: Let's Play Lotería* at *Ritual Coffee Roasters*. Finally, on **November 1**, Diosa read at the *Chicano Resource Center in Los Angeles*.

2025 NATIVE ART FESTIVAL

A Celebration of Local Native Art



FREE DROP-IN EVENT

**8 NOV
2025**

**FOUNDER'S PARK
400 N WEST STREET
ANAHEIM, 92805**

JOIN FOR A FAMILY-FRIENDLY CULTURAL EVENT FEATURING NATIVE FOOD, LIVE PERFORMANCES, AND FREE BOOKS!

WE'RE THRILLED TO SHARE THAT **OUR MEMBER DIOSA XOCHIQUETZALCÓATL** WILL BE READING AND TABLING AT THIS EVENT!

WE ENCOURAGE ALL MEMBERS TO ATTEND AND SHOW THEIR SUPPORT FOR DIOSA AS THEY SHARE THEIR INSIGHTS AND CREATIVE WORK.



**ANAHEIM
PUBLIC
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BEYOND THE UNIFORM



JOHN J. MCBREARTY

Lieutenant Colonel,
U.S. Army (Moderator)



MICHAEL SALAS

U.S. Army
(Panelist)



MANUEL ZEPEDA

U.S. Marine Corps
(Panelist)

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 10

6:00 PM - 8:00PM

Our local veterans will inspire you at this panel discussion! These heroes will speak about their time in the military and beyond. They will offer unique insights, share lessons they learned, challenges they faced and bring awareness to our country's service members. Ages 18+



Mayor Paul S. Leon • Mayor Pro Tem Alan D. Wapner
Council Members Jim W. Bowman, Debra Porada, and Daisy Macias



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@CityofOntarioCLC

Ovitt Family Community Library
215 E. C St., Ontario, CA 91764
For more information, please call
(909) 395-2205.



Indie AUTHOR DAY

Saturday, November 15, 2025

11:00am - 4:00pm

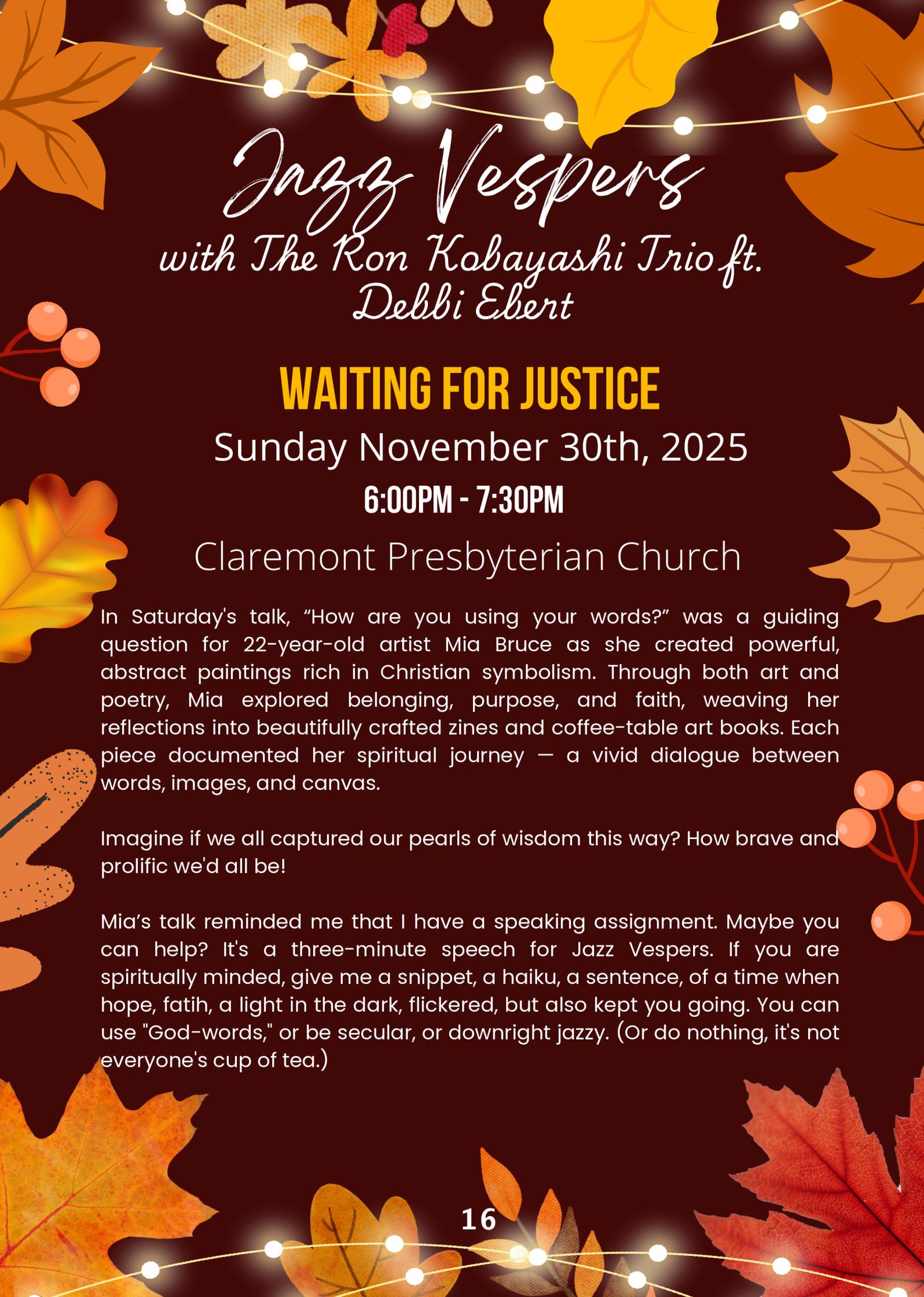
Anaheim Central Library
500 W. Broadway, Anaheim, CA 92805

Indie Author Day is a literary gathering, hosting a diverse array of activities. Explore the book fair, discovering hidden literary gems along with writing groups and small press publishers. Engage with local authors in autograph sessions and lose yourself in captivating readings. It's a day dedicated to fostering literary connections, indie authors, and embracing the magic of storytelling in all its forms.

We're delighted to announce that **our member Diosa Xochiquetzalcóatl** will be featured on the **author panels** at this event! We encourage all members to attend and show their support for Diosa as they share their insights and creative work.



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Jazzy Vespers

*with The Ron Kobayashi Trio ft.
Debbi Ebert*

WAITING FOR JUSTICE

Sunday November 30th, 2025

6:00PM - 7:30PM

Claremont Presbyterian Church

In Saturday's talk, "How are you using your words?" was a guiding question for 22-year-old artist Mia Bruce as she created powerful, abstract paintings rich in Christian symbolism. Through both art and poetry, Mia explored belonging, purpose, and faith, weaving her reflections into beautifully crafted zines and coffee-table art books. Each piece documented her spiritual journey — a vivid dialogue between words, images, and canvas.

Imagine if we all captured our pearls of wisdom this way? How brave and prolific we'd all be!

Mia's talk reminded me that I have a speaking assignment. Maybe you can help? It's a three-minute speech for Jazz Vespers. If you are spiritually minded, give me a snippet, a haiku, a sentence, of a time when hope, faith, a light in the dark, flickered, but also kept you going. You can use "God-words," or be secular, or downright jazzy. (Or do nothing, it's not everyone's cup of tea.)

Deadlines

Submissions are due the 20th of every month



Content Limits

Submissions with the following will not be considered:

- Excessive or gratuitous violence (violence for violence sake)
- Excessive or gratuitous profanity
- Excessive or gratuitous sexual situations or pornography
- Political or religious agendas that are meant to persuade or denounce



Form

- Prose word count <1,200
- No line count on poetry

Send as an attachment
Google or Word document
Times New Roman
12pt font



Photos

Accompanying images are optional

We can only publish digital images that **do not violate copyright**

You are encouraged to submit photos you have taken



Email

iecwcfreshink@gmail.com

Check your email periodically for suggestions from the editor



**FRESH
INK**

guidelines

Poetry Musings

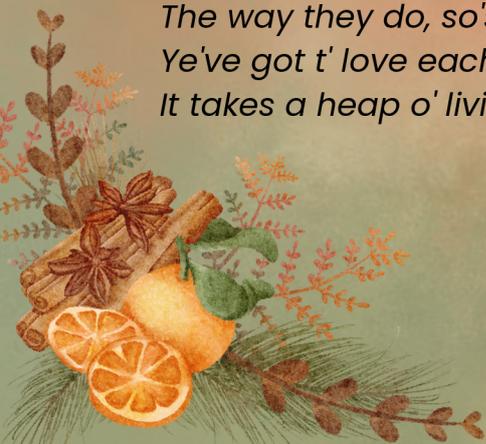
By Samuel Thomas Nichols

Gathering

As I write this, we have nearly completed the first month of autumn 2025 and are rapidly approaching what was the time of my family's annual gathering, Thanksgiving. My mother strove to have her seven children gather each fall for a traditional turkey dinner and, without fail, pumpkin pie. But as her children aged, their new commitments waged war with her desire, yet I fondly remember how we all came together for that warm southern California Thanksgiving of 1976 during our country's bicentennial celebration. She would not see her children reunited again until June 1988, and none of us knew at the time that it would be the last. My mother was an Oklahoma farm girl who knew well the life of the migrant farm worker during the Dust Bowl era, and it was the poems of Edgar (Eddie) Guest (1881-1959) and thoughts of home and family that brought her peace. One of her favorites was *Home*, which was published in *It takes A Heap o' Livin'* (1916). Here are the opening and closing stanzas:

*It takes a heap o' livin' in a house t' make it home,
A heap o' sun an' shadder, an' ye sometimes have t' roam
Afore ye really 'preciate the things ye lef' behind,
An' hunger fer 'em somehow, with 'em allus on yer mind.
It don't make any differunce how rich ye get t' be,
How much yer chairs an' tables cost, how great yer luxury;
It ain't home t' ye, though it be the palace of a king,
Until somehow yer soul is sort o' wrapped round everything.*

*Ye've got t' sing an' dance fer years, ye've got t' romp an' play,
An' learn t' love the things ye have by usin' 'em each day;
Even the roses 'round the porch must blossom year by year
Afore they 'come a part o' ye, suggestin' someone dear
Who used t' love 'em long ago, an' trained 'em jes t' run
The way they do, so's they would get the early mornin' sun;
Ye've got t' love each brick an' stone from cellar up t' dome:
It takes a heap o' livin' in a house t' make it home.*



When my grandparents left their Oklahoma farm just outside Wellston and headed west in a flatbed truck to find work, they had eighteen children, including nieces, nephews, and neighbors, ranging from a diapered baby to adult men and women piled onboard. I was told there was only one pair of shoes for the girls to share when it came time to find a bush among the New Mexico cacti, but they had room for Eddie Guest and James Whitcomb Riley (1849-1916), and the desire to keep their family together, as in this excerpt from Eddie Guest's *The Stick-Together Families*:



*The stick-together families are happier by far
Than the brothers and the sisters who take separate highways are.
The gladdest people living are the wholesome folks who make
A circle at the fireside that no power but death can break.
And the finest of conventions ever held beneath the sun
Are the little family gatherings when the busy day is done.*

*It's the stick-together family that wins the joys of earth,
That hears the sweetest music and that finds the finest mirth;
It's the old home roof that shelters all the charm that life can give;
There you find the gladdest play-ground, there the happiest spot to live.
And, O weary, wandering brother, if contentment you would win,
Come you back unto the fireside and be comrade with your kin.*

Even though the family was often apart with some older boys tending to the farm in Oklahoma, some at work in the fields of Arizona, while the youngest were picking strawberries with mom and dad in California. Yet, they survived the Depression and the Dust Bowl and eventually returned to the farm in Oklahoma, and even though some would stay behind in Arizona and California and embrace the lives they grew into, that Oklahoma farm served as an anchor-beacon to which they would often return to celebrate family, *Right Here at Home* (James Whitcomb Riley).

*Right here at home, boys, is the place, I guess,
Fer me and you and plain old happiness:
We hear the World's lots grander—likely so,—
We'll take the World's word fer it and not go.—
We know _its_ ways aint _our_ ways—so we'll stay
Right here at home, boys, where we know the way.*

*Right here at home, boys—jes right where we air!—
Birds don't sing any sweeter anywhere:
Grass don't grow any greener'n she grows
Acrost the pastur' where the old path goes,—
All things in ear-shot's purty, er in sight,
Right here at home, boys, ef we _size_ 'em right.*



The manner in which my aunts and uncles regarded all 640 acres of their Oklahoma farm, like salmon struggling upstream to gather and spawn, is a lure I never experienced since I, as the more *fortunate* (?) one, never experienced a Dust Bowl Migration or a Great Depression. However, I believe James Whitcomb Riley captured the gist of their emotional draw to their stabilizing beginning in *The Home-Going*:

*We must get home--for we have been away
So long it seems forever and a day!
And O so very homesick we have grown,
The laughter of the world is like a moan
In our tired hearing, and its songs as vain,--
We must get home--we must get home again!
We must get home: It hurts so, staying here,
Where fond hearts must be wept out tear by tear,
And where to wear wet lashes means, at best,
When most our lack, the least our hope of rest
When most our need of joy, the more our pain--
We must get home--we must get home again!
We must get home: All is so quiet there:
The touch of loving hands on brow and hair--
Dim rooms, wherein the sunshine is made mild---
The lost love of the mother and the child
Restored in restful lullabies of rain.--
We must get home--we must get home again!
We must get home, where, as we nod and drowse,
Time humors us and tiptoes through the house,
And loves us best when sleeping baby-wise,
With dreams--not tear-drops--brimming our clenched eyes,--
Pure dreams that know nor taint nor earthly stain--
We must get home--we must get home again!
We must get home; and, unremembering there
All gain of all ambitions otherwhere,
Rest--from the feverish victory, and the crown
Of conquest whose waste glory weighs us down.--
Fame's fairest gifts we toss back with disdain--
We must get home--we must get home again!*



Autumn is a time to reap that which was sown and a time to gather in the celebration of the harvests of all our crops, be they from the seed we placed in the ground or from the soul we shared with family and friends. May your gatherings immerse you in gratitude, bring you joy, and instill a sense of peace and balance.





Ways to Die Hard Before You Are Ready

By Cynthia DeMone

Lupus=organs failing=emergency exploratory surgery=no brain activity for days=Lydia finally wakes up talks with her husband Steve then her mother=Lydia passes away

Cancer=petunia, the pet name for the bag on Mom's belly=low blood pressure=can't go pee=kidney's fail from low dose chemo every month=cancer metastases up to the brain=choosing to stop dialysis=5 days later last breath

Cirrhosis=blood splat on the floor in dark red blobs=Keith, Do you want to go to the hospital?=Cardiac arrest=he lies on the hospital bed, mouth covered with blood=no color=no breathing

The Resident's Secret by Ann Casas

It remained a secret
For sixty years.
Now it's told.
A relief to the teller,
But not the victims.

A young resident doctor,
Fresh and enthusiastic in his studies,
Studying to become a pediatrician,
Was in the operation theater

Surveying a hysterectomy
And the removal of a tumor.

The surgeon in charge was a rough lot,
The hospital rifled with teamster backings
And mafia control.
"Watch what I'm doing, boys. Watch and learn.
The tumor is huge."
The young resident leaned in observation.

The hysterectomy was completed.
The uterus was removed
And displayed on the table.
"See what I'm doing, boys. Watch and learn.
I'll slice through this and find the tumor."
The lead surgeon began his cut.



Look what I'm doing, boys. Watch and learn."
The uterus ripped open. All eyes were on it.
And then... instead... not a tumor...
BUT A BABY.

The surgeon in charge
Locked eyes with his students.
"I know who you are.
Each and every one of you.
If any of you ever tell
What happened today,
What you saw,
I'll find you."

Silence.
The resident doctor
Didn't look up.

He couldn't
Wouldn't
see the other's reactions.
He only knew
He wouldn't speak.

And he kept this secret,
The worst experience
Of his long medical career,
For sixty years.



Autumn Gatherings

By Diosa Xochiquetzalc

This fall season calls for many gatherings,
gatherings of the most unexpected kind.

I will gather the broken shards of what used to be a family,
collecting the shattered pieces of what used to be a home.

I will gather the fallen and forgotten upon my humble altar,
remembering the loved ones who, too quickly, left us behind.

I will gather the shredded pieces of my star quilt,
mending the blanket that once kept me and my relatives warm.

I will gather the angels that fell out of Creation's grace,
and hand them over to Great Spirit with endless hopes for recovery.

I will gather the battered remnants of my once-so-loving heart,
and glue it back together to give unconditional love, one more try.



Recycling Naturally

By Cynthia DeMone

There isn't trash
Only recycling
Of compounds into smaller
And larger rearrangements

There is no waste
Only the chemistry
Of decomposing matter
Feeding the Fungi

There is no refuse
Only gases and substances
Transformed from one organism to another

Molecules and energy sweep forward
Into trees, microbes, birds, atmosphere
Reused and redesigned



THEME FOR DECEMBER

Winter
Wonderland

