



2011

27th Orange County Christian Writers Conference

Faculty Bios

Updated 3/23/11

Keynote Speakers

Simon Tolkien Keynote Speaker and Author



Simon Tolkien was born in England in 1959 and grew up in a small village near Oxford. His grandfather was J.R.R. Tolkien, author of the epic novel *The Lord of the Rings*. He studied Modern History at Trinity College, Oxford, and went on to become a successful London barrister specializing in criminal law, before making the decision to become a novelist, specializing in the mystery genre.

Simon's first novel, *Final Witness*, was published in 2002 and has been translated into eight languages. *The Inheritance*, his second book, was published in 2010 and his new novel, *The King of Diamonds*, is due out in March 2011.

Simon's books deal with controversial subjects, and draw on his experiences as a trial lawyer and his abiding interest in modern European history for inspiration. *The Inheritance* focused on the issue of the death penalty in 1960s England, while *The King of Diamonds* centered around a murder in an English country house, linked to a wealthy diamond dealer's possible complicity in the deportation of Belgian Jews to Auschwitz in the Second World War. Simon's writing is set squarely on this earth, not Middle Earth, but he says that writing fiction has made him feel close to his grandfather again, as if he has at last come into his true inheritance—as an author.

Simon recently moved with his wife and two children to Santa Barbara, California, where he says that he loves the fine “un-English” weather and the relaxed lifestyle. To learn more you can check out his website at: www.simontolkien.com.

Keynote Address: Becoming a Writer in the Shadow of J.R.R. Tolkien

Vinita Wright

Author and Editor at Loyola Press



Vinita Hampton Wright has been editing books for nineteen years in the Chicago area. Her skills as an editor are well known, and occasionally she accepts free-lance projects in editing and coaching.

Vinita began writing in grammar school but majored in music education, graduating from Pittsburg State University in Pittsburg, KS in 1982. She worked as a teacher in Jordan for three years and in the Missouri public school system for two. After receiving her master's degree in communications from Wheaton College in the early 1990s, she worked as an editor for Harold Shaw Publishers, moving from there to Tyndale House and finally to Loyola Press, where she continues to serve as senior editor. She published her first novel, *Grace at Bender Springs*, in 1999, followed the next year by *Velma Still Cooks in Leeway*. Her third novel, *Dwelling Places*, received the Christianity Today award for Best Fiction of 2007.

Keynote Address: The Writing Process as Work of the Soul

Saturday workshop: Nurturing Your Creative Life in the Real World

This workshop will help you explore bright and dark aspects of the creative life, how to create both interior and exterior space for writing, how to find the community needed, and how to care for yourself in the midst of creative work.

Friday Fiction Intensive: Friday Fiction Intensive Workshop: 8:30-4:30

Craft and the Creative Process: A Hands-On Workshop

Recommended reading: *The Soul Tells a Story: Engaging Creativity with Spirituality in the Writing Life* (InterVarsity Press, 2005) ISBN 0-8308-3231-9. While this is not required reading for the class, it would certainly be helpful. In this workshop we will critique each writer's work, explore writing exercises that help us engage creatively, and do nuts-and-bolts work as a group and individually. Workshop include some lecture, group discussion, critique, and writing exercises. (See Friday Intensive Workshops for more information.)

Acquisition Editors

Alice Crider

Associate Editor - Waterbrook Press



Alice Crider is an associate editor at WaterBrook Multnomah Publishing Group, a division of Random House, Inc. She began her publishing career in 1998 at Cook Communications, where she helped develop Sunday school curriculum before joining the adult trade book department. She moved to Alive Communications Literary Agency in 2001, and subsequently joined the editorial team at WaterBrook Press in 2004. Recent projects under women’s non-fiction include inspirational story, memoir, relationship, devotional, parenting, and marriage. Her favorites include faith-in-action messages that deliver authentic experience and inspiration, and practical applications that enhance relationships and break through to life change. Alice is also a trained life coach with a passion to empower others to achieve their dreams.

Workshops

Entrepreneurial Author

A look at how some writers “break out” and go big, why most don’t, and some interesting principles that can help you spike your potential, jumpstart your publishing career, and join the ranks of bestselling authors.

Get into Your Write Mind

An awareness-building session to help you break through barriers and unleash your inner author genius. Are you weary of hitting the same old wall of rejection no matter what you do to improve your writing skill? Then perhaps it’s time to uncover what’s really holding you back. (This one includes live, one-on-one coaching with a willing participant)

Rod Morris

Senior Book Editor - Harvest House Publishers



Rod Morris is a senior editor at Harvest House Publishers in Eugene, OR, where he acquires and edits both fiction and nonfiction. He was an editor at Multnomah Publishers for twenty-eight years and, before coming to Harvest House, was the senior fiction editor at NavPress. He is also a mentor and member of the editorial board for Jerry B. Jenkins's Christian Writers Guild.

Workshop: Dialogue Dos and Don'ts.

Jeff Gerke

Publisher - Marcher Lord Press



Jeff Gerke has been called the de facto gatekeeper of Christian spec-fic. He has a special place in his heart for "weird" Christian fiction (SF, fantasy, supernatural thrillers, etc.) and maintains a thriving website dedicated to those genres: www.WhereTheMapEnds.com.

Jeff has served as an editor for Multnomah Publishers, Strang Communications, and NavPress. While at Strang, Jeff launched Realms, an imprint of Christian speculative fiction. In October 2008 Jeff launched Marcher Lord Press, an indie publishing company specializing in Christian speculative fiction.

Jeff currently makes his living as a freelance editor and book doctor specializing in helping Christian novelists improve their fiction and get published. He is also a published novelist. Under the pen name Jefferson Scott he has authored six Christian novels and coauthored two nonfiction books.

Workshops

Elves, Demons, and Space Marines explores the fun and challenge of writing Christian speculative fiction.

The Three Mistakes that Will Kill Your Novel's Chances with Editors, and How To Eliminate Them (the Mistakes, Not the Editors...)

Magazine Editors

Susan King

Assistant Editor: *Upper Room Magazine*



Susan King is the assistant editor at *Upper Room* magazine. She also teaches English at Lipscomb University and functions as a seminar facilitator in leadership and group dynamics. Formerly she taught English and feature-writing classes at Biola University, served as book editor for The Institute of Scriptural Psychology, and wrote magazine features as a freelance writer.

Workshops

The Christian Writer: What do I need to be? What do I need to know, and how do I need to write? In what ways will/should my writing be different because I am a Christian writer, writing for a Christian audience?

Writing Devotionals - This workshop focuses on three essentials for writing an effective daily devotional message: universality, concentration on a single dominant image, and being concrete and sensory. Included will be information about the devotional market in general as well as specialized writing for *The Upper Room*, the world's largest daily devotional guide.

Writing that Gets Published and Read - Do you want to produce writing with such sparkle and verve that it will knock the socks off editors? Do you want them to be falling all over themselves to publish your submission and then clamoring for anything you might intend to write in the future? That's what this class is all about. This workshop will describe and illustrate the essential elements of style for writing in any genre. Participants will come away with concrete tools for self-editing to produce polished works that attract readers and editors alike.

Marilyn White

Publisher - *Precious Times Magazine*



About *Precious Times*

Precious Times magazine is the most trusted source for women and families living a modern lifestyle in faith. The magazine offers a contemporary spiritual perspective that empowers our readers in marriage, single living, work, health, sex, parenting, friendship and self-improvement. Published quarterly, *Precious Times* is available at popular newsstands including Barnes and Noble, Wal-Mart, Books-A-

Million and other retail outlets. Visit www.precioustimesmag.com or call 1-800-299-0696 for more information and subscription.

Workshops

Beginning Writers - How to Get an Article Published in a Magazine. This class discusses the ins and outs of getting started in the magazine business and assists beginners in getting that first article in front of magazine editors.

Advanced Writers - How to become a Columnist for a Magazine. If you've published before and want to know how to get a regular gig as a columnist, this class is for you. Marilyn will present clear and proven ideas to land that regular writing gig.

Literary Agents

Carol Johnson J & J Literary Advisors



Carol Johnson's acquisition of novelist Janette Oke for Bethany House Publishers in 1978 was a first step in the establishing of Christian fiction as one of the most successful genres in the industry, the one with continuing growth through the recent economic downturn. Her husband, Gary Johnson, took over the fledgling publishing efforts of Bethany in 1960, about the time Carol began typesetting in the Bethany printing division—on a Linotype machine where she completed her first editorial project. After college and marriage, she eventually took up the editorial reins of the publishing house, including her commitment to finding novelists whose stories were interwoven with a Christian worldview. Carol

was instrumental in establishing the Christy Awards for Excellence in Christian Fiction in 2000 as well as the Christian Fiction Task Force, a group of publishers banding together to promote Christian fiction in CBA stores. The ACFW has named their annual fiction award program after her. She and Gary now consult with publishers, authors, and editors.

Workshop - Book Proposals that Make an Impression: How to Get a Publisher to Take Notice

Carol Johnson is a powerhouse in the book proposal and publishing committee world. In the incredibly competitive world of book publishing, it takes a great proposal to get noticed. Book proposals should be designed to meet the needs of the publisher and the dynamics of the publishing committee. Often they are not. Carol brings her knowledge and experience to teach you what it takes to create a professional proposal that will be taken seriously by publishers.

Lauren Yoho, Literary Agent D.C. Jacobson Literary Agents



Lauren Yoho The written word is one of **Lauren Yoho's** greatest passions. She earned her bachelor of arts in print communication and biblical studies from Moody Bible Institute, where she gained a reputation for outside-the-box material as an editor and columnist for the school's bi-weekly newspaper. Lauren's background in Bible and ministry fuels her desire to use the written word through her career to creatively honor the name of Christ in a dishonoring culture. Lauren joined DCJA in 2008. She is looking for YA authors with fresh perspective and fiction authors with an extraordinary story to tell. Lauren also processes the daily flood of incoming queries and handles communications with consulting clients.

Workshop

Writing to a YA or Children's Audience: Age is Everything

This workshop will help young adult and children's book writers better understand the importance of writing to a specific age group and provide tips and resources for writing to specific age groups.

Jenni Burke, Literary Agent and Consultant D.C. Jacobson Literary Agents



Jenni Burke is an agent with D.C. Jacobson & Associates, an innovative author management company. In 2006, she helped start DCJA with Don Jacobson, the former owner/president of Multnomah Publishers. Their first client was Francis Chan—whose debut title, *Crazy Love*, has sold over one million copies. Jenni has been guiding authors into successful career launches ever since. Jenni's background is in editorial, project management, and business; she brings a special eye for marketing to her book proposals, which often earn praise from CBA editors as among the best in the industry. She represents an array of nonfiction and fiction authors whose writing uniquely contributes to the mission of *renewing the Church and redeeming culture for Jesus Christ*. Through ECPA's

www.ChristianManuscriptSubmissions.com,

Jenni dedicates one day a week to providing aspiring authors with proposal critique and consultation. She and her husband Seth live in Sisters, Oregon, nestled at the foot of the Cascade Mountains. In addition to good books, her interests include teen ministry, international travel, and exploring God's grand playground.

Workshop - Marketing Your Book Idea: An agent reveals how to help agents, publishers, and readers come to love your book *almost* as much as you do. Questions answered will include: When and how should I begin marketing my book? What's the best way to approach an agent or publisher and how do I gain their attention? What's my responsibility for promoting my book after publication? What can I do right now to give my manuscript

Authors

Mary DeMuth Author and Speaker



Mary DeMuth is an author, speaker and book mentor who helps folks turn trials to triumph. She is also the author of ten books, Mary helps writers reach their maximum potential through mentoring and teaching. She makes her home in Texas with her husband and three kids. Find out more at <http://www.marydemuth.com>

Saturday Workshop

Creating Great Nonfiction

The iStep method of creating great nonfiction. Mary shares five ways nonfiction writers (including memoirists) can make their prose stand out, impact, and shine.

Friday Memoir Intensive

Memoir Workshop 8:30 to 4:30

This full day class on memoir writing will take place on Friday, April 29, before the actual conference. Tobias Wolf wrote, "Memoir is your memory telling you about your past." Mary shares her process of writing a memoir, including 5 questions to ask yourself and 5 things to remember. Writers will have portions of their memoirs read through, critiqued, and workshopped in this highly practical, hands-on class. Class is limited to writers who have a memoir in progress. For more information see Friday Intensive Workshops.

Nancy Sanders

Bestselling Children's Author



Nancy Sanders is a bestselling and award-winning children's author. She has over 80 books published with houses such as Concordia, Tyndale, Standard, Barbour, Scholastic, and Chicago Review Press. She writes a children's column for the Writer's online magazine and teaches teleclasses at the National Writing for Children Center. Her new book, *America's Black Founders*, won the Best Books 2010 Award for Children's Nonfiction. She is the author of the groundbreaking book, *Yes! You Can Learn How to Write Children's Books, Get Them Published, and Build a Successful Writing Career*. www.nancyisanders.com

Workshop - From Story Arcs to National Parks: How to Write Fiction and Nonfiction for Children

B.J. Taylor

Award-Winning Author



B.J. Taylor has been published numerous times in *Guideposts*, *Angels on Earth*, more than twenty-three *Chicken Soup for the Soul* books, and many other anthologies and magazines. She enjoys traveling, exercising and eating right, and helping others. B.J. has three novels in the works. She calls her first series dog-lit (think chick-lit for dog lovers). Ask her about the animals in her life, particularly her dog Rex and whether he has a new friend, and visit her dog blog at www.bjtaylorblog.wordpress.com.

Workshops

The Secrets of Successful Writers Revealed

Ever wonder how they do it? How do some people get agents, get contracts, get published, make money? You'll learn the secrets that many published authors hold close to their hearts, and the TOP 3 that you MUST have. Come and learn how to be a successful, confident, published writer.

Turning Personal Experiences Into Stories That Sell

Got a life? Then you've got stories to sell. Your life is rich fodder for 1,200 word pieces that will resonate with readers. Learn the formula to craft an inspirational story that you get PAID for. You'll even leave with a handout on where to submit. Don't miss this class; it can help you make your first sale.

Kathi Macias

Award-Winning Author/Speaker



Kathi “Easy Writer” Macias represents [Author Solutions](#), which offers many options for self-publishing. She is a multi-award winning writer who has authored over 30 books, including *Valeria’s Cross* and the popular Extreme Devotion series. A former newspaper columnist and string reporter, Kathi has taught creative and business writing in various venues and has been a host as well as a guest on many radio and television programs. Kathi is a popular speaker at churches, women’s clubs and retreats, and writer’s conferences. Kathi lives in Homeland, CA with her husband Al, where the two of them spend their free time riding their Harley.

Workshops

On Task, On Target, and On Time

Realistic Publishing Options in a Competitive Market

Merrie Destafano

Young Adult Author



Merrie Destefano left a 9-to-5 desk job as a magazine editor to become a full-time novelist and freelance editor. Her first novel, *Afterlife: The Resurrection Chronicles*, is an urban fantasy published by HarperCollins/Eos in 2010, and her second novel, *Feast: Harvest of Dreams* comes out in July, 2011. With twenty years’ experience in publishing, her background includes editor of *Victorian Homes* magazine and founding editor of *Cottages & Bungalows* magazine. Born in the Midwest, she currently lives in Southern California with her husband, a Siamese cat, two German shepherds, and the occasional wandering possum. Her favorite hobbies include reading speculative fiction and watching old Star Trek episodes, while her

incurable addiction is writing. She loves to camp in the mountains, walk on the beach, watch old movies and listen to alternative music—although rarely all at the same time. For more information, visit www.merriedestefano.com.

Workshop

Backstory: The Invisible Spine of Your Novel

This class will discuss how backstory can make or break your novel. Tips include how to create backstory that will give life to your characters, settings, and world, as well as how and when to incorporate that information. Techniques include character journaling, world building, creating a domino effect and doing sensory research, as well as using symbols, metaphor and setting to reinforce your theme. This course is appropriate for both teens and adults.

John Fox

Creator of Book Fox - A Literary Blog



John Fox's fiction has appeared in *Third Coast*, *Los Angeles Review*, *Tampa Review*, *Pedestal Magazine* and *Adirondack Review*. He won the *Third Coast Fiction Contest*, *Poets & Writers* named him a finalist in their California Writers Exchange Award, and *Relief: A Christian Literary Expression* awarded him the Editor's Choice for Fiction.

He earned graduate degrees in creative writing from USC and NYU. At *BookFox*, a literary blog, he has covered short stories, novels, and literary news for the past four years, gaining accolades from *The Guardian*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Utne Reader*, *Writer's Digest*, *Publisher's Weekly*, and *Huffington Post*. In addition to blogging, he's written about books for the *Los Angeles Times*, *US Airways Magazine*, and *PBS Online*.

Workshops

Writing the Christian Short Story

Insider Blogging Tips--Go from Beginner to Pro

Freelance Editors & Writers

Kathy Ide

Owner, The Christian PEN, Proofreaders and Editors Network



Kathy Ide is a published author of books, articles, play and movie scripts, short stories, devotionals, and curriculum. She has ghostwritten several books and speaks at writers' conferences across the country. She is a full-time freelance editor/mentor for new writers, established authors, and book publishers. She also acts as an editor services coordinator through the two groups she founded: The Christian PEN: Proofreaders and Editors Network (www.TheChristianPEN.com) and the Christian Editor Network (www.ChristianEditor.com). For more, see www.KathyIde.com.

Workshops

Polishing the PUGS: Punctuation, Usage, Grammar, and Spelling

From her years as a professional freelance editor, Kathy Ide shares the most common mistakes made by authors in the areas of punctuation, usage, grammar, and spelling in this fun, interactive workshop.

Susan Osborn

Editor-in-Chief: Christian Communicator Critique Services Acquisition Editor: New Hope Publishing



Susan Titus Osborn is the director of the Christian Communicator Manuscript Critique Service where she heads a staff of 18 editors. She has authored 30 books, including *Wounded by Words*, co-authored by Jeenie Gordon and Karen Kosman. Her latest book, *Too Soon to Say Goodbye*, was released January, 2010 by New Hope Publishers. Susan is a member of the CLASseminars staff and is also a CLASS speaker. As an author, Susan represents New Hope Publishers. She lives in Fullerton, California, with her husband Dick. They have five grown children, 12 grandkids, and 2 great-grandsons.

Workshops

Before You Begin – This class is for those who have never attended a writers’ conference or those new to this conference. The information given will help first-timers know what to expect from the day: from the classes, from appointments with editors and professional writers, and from themselves. It will cover how to pitch your article or book proposal.

Writing 101 – Just starting out? This class will teach all the basics needed to write your first article or short story. You will learn my three-step writing method and how to write and format a manuscript to an editor's specifications. Also, ideas will be given on where to market your finished product.

Mick Silva Freelance Editor



Mick Silva is a fiction and nonfiction editor with over 10 years’ experience shaping books for cross-market appeal. He spent 5 years as acquisitions and developmental editor for WaterBrook Multnomah Publishing Group and 5 years before that writing and editing for Focus on the Family. He is currently hard at work building an online community at YourWritersGroup.com, dedicated to helping develop progressive freelance authors for the new publishing frontier. He lives with his wife and 2 daughters in Portland, Oregon, where he tirelessly promotes the vast opportunities that exist for Christian writers beyond traditional publishing.

Workshops

The New Publishing Rules

Bring your pitch sheet, but leave your assumptions at home. Do you know what awaits you in the ever-expanding market of digital and print publishing. Christian market, general, or self-publishing, nothing is the same and neither should your book be. Determine your next steps here.

The Top 5 Secrets for Savvy Christian Authors

You don't have to attend to learn the secrets, but do you know how to grab attention--and keep it? How are you adding value to your readers' lives? What makes your message stand out and what makes you the perfect spokesperson for it? We'll discuss these questions and more so come prepared to work.

Workshop Leaders

John David Ware 168 Film Project



John David Ware is the founder and president of the 168 Film Project based in Los Angeles, CA. The **168 Hour Film Project** is a competition produce a short film in 168 hours (1 week). These 11-minute movies are based on a theme and a Bible verse. All films are created during production week and premiere at the **168 Film Festival**. Graduates of the program have gone onto to produce films, commercials and other projects within the industry.

Workshops

How to Pitch Your Story to Hollywood

In this workshop attendees will learn the fundamentals of pitching a published work to a film producer. It's known that 60% of all produced film are derived from previously published works such as adult novels, YA novels, children' books, short stories, comic books and games. This workshop is designed to prepare published authors for pitching their work to a film producer.

Pitching Your Story to Hollywood

This workshop allows those who have prepared a pitch to present their published work. Live pitches will be taken by panel of experts and evaluated for their marketability as a film. This workshop will be especially valuable to published authors, whether a literary agent already represents them or not.