

2026

Annual Conference/Storyfest Memphis, TN

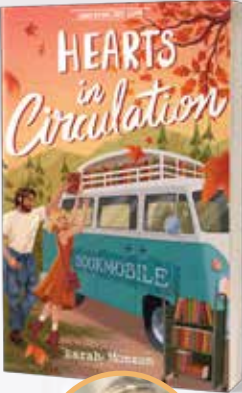
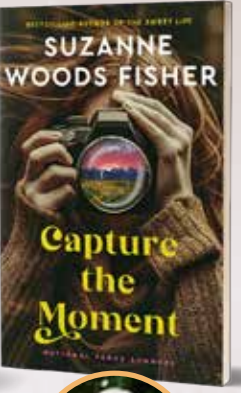
*Oh that my words were written!
Oh that they were inscribed in a book.*
- Job 19:23



 **Storyfest**
ACFW

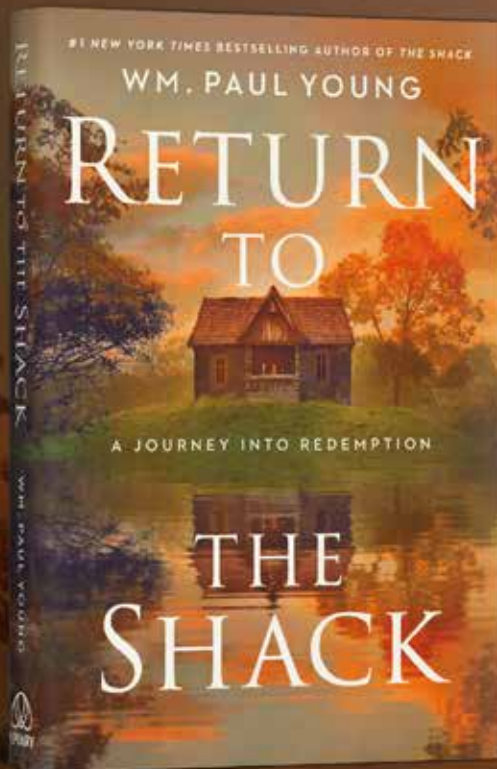
 **ACFW**
American Christian Fiction Writers

CONGRATS TO THE BAKER PUBLISHING GROUP CAROL AWARD FINALISTS!

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Bethany House	Bethany House	Revell	Bethany House	Bethany House
				
				



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Welcome!

Welcome to the 2026 ACFW National Conference!

Striving to write the words to be inscribed in a book.

The ACFW Executive Board and Staff welcome you to beautiful Memphis, Tennessee, and the fabulous Peabody Hotel. While great care and many prayers go into planning every conference, this one is extra special because this is our 25th annual conference.

If you were with us last year in Springfield, Missouri, you helped us celebrate the 25th anniversary of our organization. Twenty-five years of equipping, educating, and enjoying the company of writers and industry professionals who love Jesus and a good novel has slipped by in a heartbeat. Time flies when you're having fun—and writing books!

From a group of less than twenty, we've grown to an international organization of thousands. This organization of believers whose words spill onto the pages in countries all over the world are all part of one big family, the ACFW family. And even as our numbers have grown, ACFW still strives to treat each of you as a valued member.

Between the classes, the events, worship, and the social time, we've got something for everyone in the family. Plan your time while you're here, but allow for those God-instances where the Lord leads you to speak to someone or shows you a twist on an idea that you hadn't considered. Use your time here to soak in His presence. Those moments will become memories you'll be thinking about throughout the coming year.

This year our scripture theme comes from Job 19: 23: *Oh that my words were written! Oh that they were inscribed in a book.* Doesn't that just say it all?

It is our hope that you'll leave at the end of this gathering feeling energized and equipped to write words that will entertain and edify. May we all leave this

place having written. Wanting to write more. And being thankful that we are His scribes.

So from the attendees who are brand new to those of you who have been around since the beginning, we celebrate you. You are family here. Whether you're here to learn, to network with industry professionals, or to meet old friends and make new ones, we celebrate you. You are family here.

More important, we celebrate the Lord who has brought us all together for His purpose.

Let the family reunion begin!

Your ACFW Executive Board and Staff



Getting the Most From Your Conference Experience

Wear Your Name Badge at All Times:

Your name badge is essential for networking and identifying you as a registered attendee. It also serves as your meal package ticket. Admittance to sessions or meals will not be allowed without your name badge.

Attending Sessions:

Room assignments for each session are made according to the number of attendees registered for each session. Please arrive on time at your appointed workshop so you can find a seat without interrupting the presenter. You should have received an email with handouts for your specific sessions you signed up for. The schedule is tight to maximize your learning opportunities, so please respect the speaker's time when the class is over. They most likely have responsibilities immediately following, and the conference staff will need to clear the room to prepare for the next presentation.

Appointments:

Conference Appointment Coordinator, Casey Miller, will be available to answer your appointment questions and provide assistance. Please report to the appointments desk prior to your appointment time. Staff will direct you from there.

Appointments take place during workshop times, and presenters understand you may have to leave or return during their presentation, but please do so quietly so as to not disrupt the speaker or attendees. Please be considerate of your appointment times. Arrive a little early so you don't keep anyone waiting. It's imperative that you comply with the time allotment and the time keepers' instructions. You don't want to infringe on another member's appointment time. Etiquette during appointments speaks highly of you as a professional.

No Faculty-Hosted Meals:

Due to the sheer size of the conference, there are no faculty-hosted meals this year. Most of the agents, editors, mentors, and industry professionals make themselves available in the lobby areas after the day's events are concluded.

Babies and Children:

The ACFW conference is a professional event. Babies (even nursing infants) and children are not allowed in any general sessions, meals, worship sessions, workshops, or spotlights.

Session Recordings:

The conference sessions will be available for purchase, inclusion of all Early Bird sessions options. If you didn't utilize the option during registration, you may visit the ACFW website and order the conference recordings later. Because of

our contract with the hotel, recording and/or videotaping is only allowed by ACFW or ACFW's contracted audio/video company.

Friday Night Pizza Genre Party:

Finally, a pizza party option from ACFW! We'll break off into separate groups based on your genre of writing. This is a fun way to connect with other writers in your own genre. After pizza, there will be a hosted discussion and lots of fun, focused on the various genres.

If pizza isn't your thing, you may also do dinner on your own. There are various restaurants in the hotel, as well as the area surrounding the Peabody. Or the on-site restaurants have various options for you to check out. Whether you join in for the pizza party or do dinner on your own, you're welcome to join the fun of the genre group gatherings after the pizza party.

Friday Zone Breakfast:

Lunch on Friday is designated as the Zone Lunch. Make face-to-face connections with ACFW members from your area. Tables will be designated and labeled by zones for this meal. Swap stories and contact information, share local research interest, and establish friendships are the beginnings of new ACFW local chapters.

Thursday Night Milestones Dinner:

Thursday night will be a special night at the conference, because it's the Milestones Dinner. ACFW will bestow another honor for member novelists whose careers have reached significant publishing milestones. This special recognition will be awarded to novelists who have reached landmarks of 25, 50, 75, 100, or 100+ published novels (traditionally, QIP*, or a combination), and they will receive a beautiful ACFW pin marking that accomplishment. This is a wonderful night of celebration and encouragement.

Saturday Special Guest Speaker, Karen Kingsbury Luncheon:

Encouraging words from our guest, followed immediately by lunch.

Saturday Awards Gala Dinner:

It's the highlight of the awards season for Christian Fiction. We'll announce with winners of the Carol Awards, Genesis Contest, plus Agent and Editor of the Year and more. It's a very special evening to wrap up ACFW's national conference. Don't miss it.

2026 Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient: Karen Kingsbury



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Storyfest
ACFW

American Christian Fiction Writers is pleased to announce that #1 New York Times bestselling novelist Karen Kingsbury will be honored with the prestigious 2026 ACFW Lifetime Achievement Award. This award, which recognizes the pinnacle of excellence in Christian fiction, will be presented on Saturday, August 29, 2026, at the Peabody Hotel in Memphis. Karen will also be giving a special address at the conference lunch on Saturday.

Karen Kingsbury, renowned as America's most beloved inspirational storyteller, has authored over twenty-five million copies of her award-winning books. Her most recent dozen titles have consistently topped bestseller lists, and numerous of her novels are currently in development as major motion pictures. Recently, Karen established her own film production company, Karen Kingsbury Productions. The company's inaugural theatrical release, 'Someone Like You,' had a successful release in 2024. Additionally, The Baxters television series, based on Karen's Baxter Family books, is currently available on Prime Video and ranks among the network's most popular series. Karen and her husband, Donald, reside near their children and grandchildren in Tennessee.

More information can be found at karenkingsbury.com.

Wed/Thurs Schedule

Wednesday, August 26, 2026

Time	Event	Location
10:00 am – 9:00 pm	Bookstore Books Dropoff	Continental Ballroom
4:00 pm – 8:00 pm	Registration Desk	Grand Ballroom Foyer

Thursday, August 27, 2026

Time	Event	Location
8:00 am – 5:00 pm	Registration Desk	Grand Ballroom Foyer
8:00 am – 3:00 pm	Early Bird Session #1: (optional add-on session) – Donald Maass Plot Meets Character	Grand Ballroom D
8:00 am – 1:30 pm	Early Bird Session #2: (optional add-on session) – Susan May Warren & Rachel Hauck The Page-Turner Masterclass: Crafting Unputdownable Fiction	Grand Ballroom E
8:00 am – 6:00 pm	Bookstore	Continental Ballroom
3:00 pm – 3:45 pm	First-time Attendees Orientation	Hernando Desoto
3:15 pm – 4:15 pm	Honoree Reception (by invitation only)	Plantation Roof & Skywalk
4:30 pm – 5:30 pm	Opening of the 2026 ACFW Conference	Grand Ballroom ABC
5:30 pm – 8:00 pm	Milestones Celebration Dinner	Grand Ballroom ABC

Prayer Room

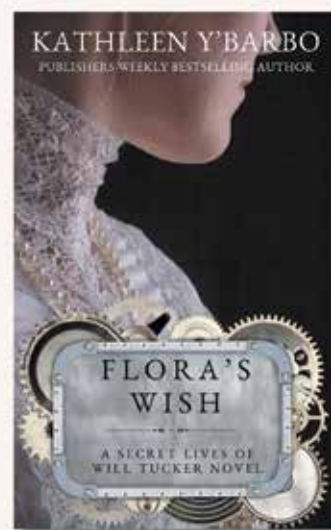
Alonzo Locke

Conference Office

Bert Parker

MEET

YOUR NEXT READ
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Friday Schedule

Friday, August 28, 2026

Time	Event	Location
8:00 am - 9:00 am	Zone Breakfast	Grand Ballroom ABC
8:00 am - 11:45 am	Registration Desk	Grand Ballroom Foyer
2:00 pm - 5:30 pm		
8:00 am - 12:15 pm	Bookstore	Continental Ballroom
1:45 pm - 5:45 pm		
9:30 am - 11:45 am	Appointment Desk	Peabody Executive Center 3rd Floor
2:00 pm - 5:30 pm		
9:15 am - 12:15 pm	Continuing Education Tracks CE 01: Layering in Writing - Crafting Depth, Meaning, and Narrative Power - DiAnn Mills Grand EF CE 02: The Story Cube: Rethinking Story From the Ground Up - Steven James General Moorman CE 03: Special Presentation by HarperCollins Christian Publishing Team Grand D CE 04: Better Together: The Author-Influencer Partnership Blueprint - Jaime Jo Wright Hernando DeSoto **STORYFEST READERS INVITED TO THIS SESSION**	
12:30 pm - 1:30 pm	Lunch	Grand Ballroom ABC
	Storyfest readers invited to specially hosted author tables	
2:00 pm - 3:00 pm	Workshops 1-4 WS 01: Practical Creativity: Tips and Tricks for Living a More Creative Life - Ann Byle General Moorman WS 02: Writing Engaging Nonfiction and Bible Studies - Donna Snow Grand D WS 03: Enduring on the Writer's Journey - Rachel Hauck & Joy Massenburge Hernando DeSoto WS 04: Editing as An Act of Love - Ami McConnell Grand EF	
3:15 pm - 4:15 pm	Workshops 5-8 WS 05: Breathing Life into the Past: Writing Immersive Historical Fiction - Cara Putman Grand D WS 06: From Spaghetti to Lasagna - Layering the Perfect Romantic Suspense - Kate Angelo Hernando DeSoto WS 07: The Austen Method: Writing Romance According to Jane Austen - Pepper Basham Grand EF WS 08: Transform Your Author Career: Start a Podcast - Rebecca Reed, Rebecca Yauger, & Melissa LaShure General Moorman	
4:30 pm - 5:30 pm	Workshops 9-12 WS 09: Creating Successful Author Events - Allie Plieter Hernando DeSoto WS 10: Don't Break the Bank or Your Foot - Dr. Ronda Wells Grand D WS 11: First Five Pages - Angela Hunt Grand EF WS 12: Intro to Kid Lit Book Proposals with a Picture Book Emphasis - Jennifer Jahn General Moorman	
6:00 pm - 9:00 pm	Pizza Parties Opt-in inclusion of a pizza party (ticket required) Contemporary Hernando DeSoto General General Moorman Historical Grand D Mystery/Suspense/Thriller Grand EF	
9:00 pm - 9:45 pm	Zone Meeting	Magnolia
	Prayer Room	Alonzo Locke
	Conference Office	Bert Parker

Saturday Schedule

Saturday, August 29, 2026

Time	Event	Location
8:00am - 8:45 am	Worship and Announcements	Grand Ballroom ABC
8:00 am – 12:15 pm	Registration Desk	Grand Ballroom Foyer
1:45 pm – 3:30 pm		
9:00 am – 12:15	Bookstore	Continental Ballroom
2:30 pm – 4:30 pm		
30 minutes after gala until 11:00 pm		
9:00 am - 10:30 am	Booksigning	Continental Ballroom
8:30 am - 12:00 noon	Appointment Desk	Peabody Executive Center 3rd Floor
1:45 pm - 4:30 pm		
10:45 am - 11:45 am	Workshops 13-16 WS 13: Publishing Contract Basics for Indie & Trad Authors - Rick Acker and Steve Laube WS 14: Do You Need a Hero? We have a panel of them! WS 15: Kiss and Tell: Writing Kisses That Matter - Pepper Basham and Bethany Turner WS 16: Make Your Fiction Sparkle - Carol Post	Grand D General Moorman Hernando DeSoto Grand EF
12:00 noon - 1:15 pm	Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient, Karen Kingsbury	Grand Ballroom ABC
1:45 pm - 2:45 pm	Lunch	
2:45 pm - 3:15 pm	Gala Ceremony Rehearsal	Grand Ballroom ABC
3:30 am – 4:30 pm	Workshops 17-20 WS 17: Research Like A Pro - Joni Fisher WS 18: Story Spark - Tara Johnson WS 19: 10 Things I Like About You: Agent & Client POV - Stephanie Alton & Linda Kozar WS 20: Get a Great Start as an Indie - Sara Turnquist	Grand EF Hernando DeSoto Grand D General Moorman
4:30 pm – 5:30 am	Photo Booths	Continental Ballroom
6:00 pm – ?? pm	ACFW Awards Gala	Grand Ballroom ABC
	Finalists WITH card allowed to enter at 5:30pm.	
	<i>MUST Have Ticket to Enter</i>	
Prayer Room		Alonzo Locke
Conference Office		Bert Parker

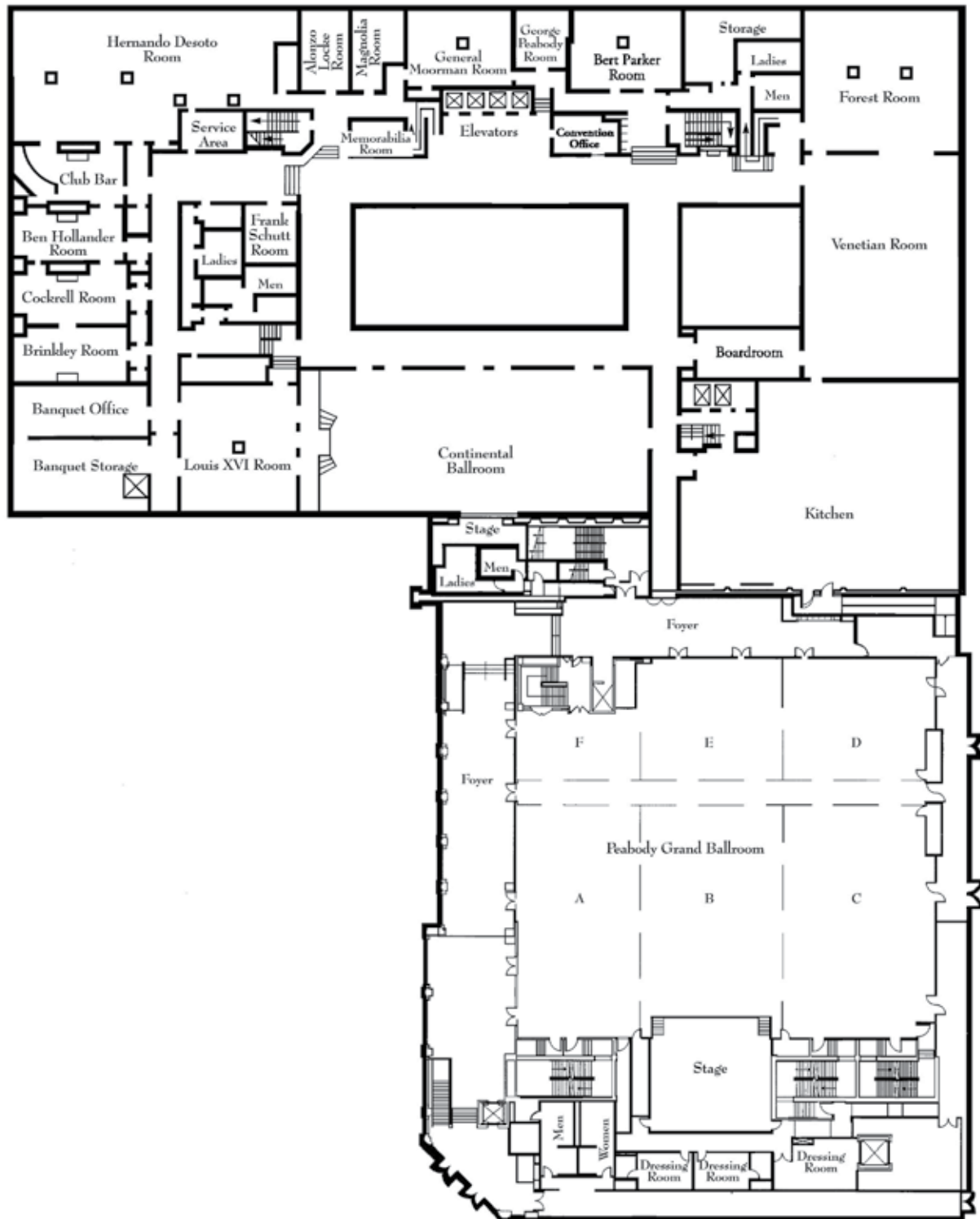
Sunday Schedule

Sunday, September 7, 2025

Time	Event	Location
9:00 am – 11:00 am	Bookstore Close Out and Book Pickup	Continental Ballroom

Hotel Floorplan

Mezzanine Level Floor Plan



Early Bird Sessions

Thursday



Early Bird #1

Donald Maass

Inner Story: Plot Meets Character
8:00 am - 3:00 pm

Powerful stories happen both inside and out. Character arc is just the start. The methods of highly-engaging inner journeys encompass interior narration, self-measurement, human longing, dual nature struggle, family shaping, social context, the influence of era, moral conflict and more. Deepen the other half of your work-in-progress with longtime master class instructor and agent Donald Maass.



Early Bird #2

USA Today Bestselling

Author Susan May Warren &

New York Times Bestselling

Author Rachel Hauck

The Page-Turner Masterclass: Crafting
Unputdownable Fiction

8:00 am - 1:30 pm



Your readers deserve a book they can't put down. You deserve to know how to write it. Flat characters? Sagging middles? Stakes that feel more like suggestions than life-or-death choices? If your manuscript is stuck in "almost great" territory, this intensive 4-hour masterclass will show you exactly what's missing—and how to fix it. Join two powerhouse authors who've sold millions of books and taught thousands of writers for a surgical deep-dive into the craft elements that separate forgettable fiction from stories readers lose sleep over. In this intensive workshop, you'll discover: The Story Equation – The proven formula for creating characters so vivid, so real, your readers will feel like they know them personally. The Revolutionary 4-Act Plot – The structural secret powering today's bestsellers (and why the traditional 3-act structure leaves readers cold). High-Stakes Scene Mastery – How to raise tension in every single scene so your story crackles with the kind of energy that makes readers cancel plans. The 4 Pillars of a Super Novel – The essential elements every powerful, marketable book needs to stand out in a crowded marketplace. Perfect for: First-time novelists ready to nail their debut, seasoned authors wanting to level up, and anyone tired of writing books readers forget by Tuesday. Walk away with: Battle-tested frameworks, practical tools, downloadable resources, and crystal-clear direction for your work-in-progress. Stop guessing. Start mastering. Your super novel is waiting.



Continuing Education Sessions

CE 01

Layering in Writing- Crafting Depth, Meaning, and Narrative Power

Presented by: DiAnn Mills

This CE class is designed for advanced writers who want to move beyond strong storytelling techniques into deep, meaningful, unforgettable stories. The writer will learn how to layer character, plot, setting, dialogue, emotion, theme, symbolism, and reader experience for a cohesive story that entertains, inspires, and encourages the reader with a deep emotional experience. Hands-on exercises and handout provided.

CE 02

The Story Cube: Rethinking Story From the Ground Up

Presented by: Steven James

Ever since Aristotle, story theorists have been looking at story through a temporal lens—beginning, middle, and end, or first act, second act, and third act. But what if there was another way of conceptualizing story on a more elemental level? What if there was a way of understanding story that was easy to visualize and remember and that would apply to any genre you write? Well, there is, and in this seminar you'll learn how it can transform your writing and storytelling forever.



CE 03

Acquisitions Process

Presented by: HarperCollins Publishing Team

Two editors from Thomas Nelson fiction walk through the acquisitions process from initial pitch to signed contract, answering some of the questions surrounding the somewhat mysterious process: What are some of the conversations we have? What does an ed board/acquisitions meeting look like? What helps a proposal stand out from others? And how do offers come together? Please note that this will not be a time to pitch ideas to the editors, but rather is an opportunity to gain a peek behind the curtain.

CE 04

Better Together: The Author-Influencer Partnership Blueprint**

Presented by: Jaime Jo Wright

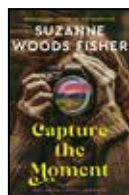
This interactive workshop explores the powerful synergy between authors and book influencers — and how both sides can show up better for each other. You'll learn how to build and run street teams that genuinely benefit readers and writers, sharpen your social media strategy for authentic book promotion, and walk away with actionable collaboration tips that turn one-off shoutouts into lasting partnerships. Whether you're an author looking to empower your biggest champions or a bookish influencer ready to grow your platform and attract more review opportunities, this session is packed with resources, real-world examples, and strategies to help you amplify great books — together.

***Storyfest Attendees are invited to join in this session!*

2026 Carol Award Finalists



The Carol Awards are ACFW's recognition for quality fiction published in the previous calendar year.



Contemporary

Before I Go by Marilyn K. Blair
Independent Author
Editor – Kelly Barr

What the River Keeps by Cheryl Grey Bostrom
Tyndale House
Editors – Elizabeth Jackson and Sarah Rische

Capture the Moment by Suzanne Woods Fisher
Revell
Editor – Andrea Doering



Historical

The Fourth Magi by Bryan E. Canter
Independent Author
Editor – Ed Marlow

The Women of Oak Ridge by Michelle Shocklee
Tyndale House
Editor – Kathryn S. Olson

Last Light Over Galveston by Jennifer L. Wright
Tyndale House
Editor – Sarah Rische

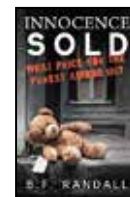


Historical Romance

The Lawyer and the Laundress by Christine Hill Suntz
Tyndale House
Editor – Kathryn S. Olson

The Collector of Burned Books by Roseanna M. White
Tyndale House
Editors – Elizabeth Jackson and Kathryn S. Olson

A Song in the Dark by Kimberley Woodhouse
Bethany House (Baker Publishing Group)
Editors – Karen Ball and Jessica Sharpe



Mystery/Suspense/Thriller

Midnight Masquerade by Elle E. Kay
Independent Author • Editor – Sarah Hamaker

Every Hour Until Then by Gabrielle Meyer
Bethany House (Baker Publishing Group)
Editors – Bethany Lenderink and Jessica Sharpe

Innocence Sold by B. F. Randall
Iron Stream Media
Editors – Suzanne Austin and Larry J. Leech II



Novella

Bible and a .44 (part of the From This Moment On collection)
by Robin Lee Hatcher, Independent Author
Editor – Deborah Raney

The Christmas Book Flood by Roseanna M. White
Tyndale House
Editors – Elizabeth Jackson and Kathryn S. Olson

A Star in the West (part of the On a Midnight Clear collection)
by Karen Witemeyer
Bethany House (Baker Publishing Group)
Editor – Jessica Sharpe

2026 Carol Award Finalists



Romance

Before Grace by Anna Daugherty
Black Rose Writing • Editor - Denise Harmer

Small Town Harmony by Milla Holt
Independent Author • Editor – Sara Turnquist

Hearts in Circulation by Sarah Monzon
Bethany House (Baker Publishing Group)
Editors – Jessica Sharpe and Jennifer Veilleux

Meant for Me by Betsy St. Amant
Sunrise Publishing • Editor – Susan Warren



Speculative

Forever by Gina Detwiler
Ally Press

Editors – Erin Healy and Kristen Stieffel

Echo Nova by Clint Hall
Enclave Publishing (Oasis Family Media)
Editors – Sarah Grimm and Lisa Laube

Darkfell by Amanda Wright
Quill & Flame Publishing House
Editors – Brittany Eden and Jennifer Frankovic



Romantic Suspense

Failed Protocol by Cindy Bonds
Scrivenings Press
Editors – Kaci Banks and Susie Waltner

Mistletoe and Malice by Lori DeJong
Scrivenings Press
Editors – Kaci Banks and Elena Hill

I Can't Hear You by Vikki Kestell
Independent Author
Editors - Cheryl Adkins and Greg McCann

Protecting You by Robin Patchen
Independent Author • Editor – Ray Rhamey



Young Adult

Sanctified by V. Romas Burton
Quill & Flame Publishing House
Editors - Stephany Araujo and Jessica Gwyn

This Isn't Shakespeare by Stephanie Cardel
WordCrafts Press
Editors – Janelle Leonard and Mike Parker

Truth Cursed by Angie Dickinson
Enclave Publishing (Oasis Family Media)
Editors – Avily Jerome and Lisa Laube

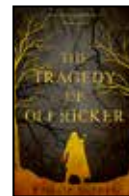
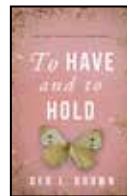


Short Novel

One Nine by Sara Davison
Independent Author • Editor - Sherra Lee Bridle

To Capture a Mountain Man by Robin Lee Hatcher
Independent Author • Editor – Deborah Raney

To Reveal a Reckless Love by Robin Lee Hatcher
Independent Author • Editor – Deborah Raney



Debut Author

To Have and To Hold by Deb L. Brown
Independent Author
Editors - KaTrina Jackson and Cassie Mae

Tattooed Woman at the Well by Terri McAdoo
Redemption Press • Editor – Lesley McDaniel

The Tragedy of Oli Ricker by Phillip Snyder
Living Tome Publishing
Editors – Emily Whitten and Leilah Wright

Agents



Stephanie Alton
The Blythe Daniel Agency



Lynette Eason
Steve Laube Agency



Steve Laube
Steve Laube Agency



Ami McConnell
Ami McConnell Literary Agency



Tamela Hancock Murray
Steve Laube Agency



Cynthia Ruchti
*Books & Such
Literary Management*

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Amanda Bostic
*HarperCollins
Christian Publishing*



Stephanie Broene
Tyndale House Publishers



Linda Fulkerson
Scrivenings Press LLC



Liana George
Scrivenings Press LLC



Rochelle Gloege
Bethany House Publishers



Laura Helweg
Tommy Nelson



Cynthia Hickey
Winged Publications



Thomas Hickey
Winged Publications



Tina James
Love Inspired



Becky Monds
*HarperCollins
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Jessica Sharpe
Bethany House Publishers



Besarta Sinanovic
Love Inspired



Amy Voss
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Wholesome &
Cozy Romance

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- ♥ Small Town
- ♥ Found Family
- ♥ Food & Fellowship
- ♥ Emotional Journeys
- ♥ Happily Ever After



Awards - 2026 Nominees



The Lena Nelson Dooley Mentor of the Year Award

Our award's namesake was a feisty redhead who was with ACFW from the very beginning. She cared deeply about the lives, success, and, most importantly, the relationship with the Lord of the people she came in contact with. Many of you have been touched by her in some way or another, whether through the writers groups she fostered, conversations at conferences, or encouraging words on our loop. There will never be another like her!

The Lena Nelson Dooley Mentor of the Year Finalists:

Deirdre Lockhart
DiAnn Mills
Tina Radcliffe

Agent of the Year Finalists:

Lynette Eason
The Steve Laube Agency
Janet Grant
*Books and Such
Literary Management*
Tamela Hancock Murray
The Steve Laube Agency

Editor of the Year Finalists:

Deirdre Lockhart
Brilliant Cut Editing
Janyre Tromp
Editing Insiders
Susan May Warren
Sunrise Publishing

A promotional graphic for Michele Olson's books. It features a circular portrait of Michele Olson, a woman with blonde hair and glasses. Below her name, it says "LakeGirlPublishing.com". There are six book covers displayed in a 2x3 grid, each with a different color and title: "Being Ethel", "Being Dorothy", "Being Alice", "Being Wendy", "Being Nancy", and "Being Goldie". At the bottom, it says "MACKINAC STORIES OF Mystery - Mayhem - Miracles, and a Touch of Romance" and "Read as stand-alones or in order!". There is a QR code and a link "linktr.ee/micheleolson". A diagonal banner at the bottom right says "More Stories Coming!".

Novels from Author & Artist
Michele Olson
LakeGirlPublishing.com

Being Ethel
Being Dorothy
Being Alice
Being Wendy
Being Nancy
Being Goldie

MACKINAC STORIES OF
Mystery - Mayhem - Miracles, and a Touch of Romance
Read as stand-alones or in order!

In Paperback Wherever Books are Sold
Ebooks, Audio, and KU on Amazon
linktr.ee/micheleolson

More Stories Coming!

A promotional graphic for Love Inspired story submissions. It features the Love Inspired logo at the top, which includes a stylized leaf icon. Below the logo, it says "LOVE INSPIRED INSPIRATIONAL ROMANCE". The main text reads "STORY SUBMISSIONS WELCOME!" in large, bold letters. Below that, it says "Writing guidelines on Harlequin.Submittable.com". At the bottom, there are two book covers: "A FAMILY FOR THE AMISH ORPHANS" by Jo Ann Brown and "TEXAS COLD CASE MURDER" by Laura Scott. The background is a soft-focus image of a field with a sunset or sunrise sky.

Friday Workshops

Workshops 1-4: Friday - 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm

WS 01: Practical Creativity: Tips and Tricks for Living a More Creative Life

Presented by: Ann Byle

Creativity is more than creating Fine Art in all its forms. True creativity is about courage, curiosity, noticing, practicing empathy, moving past the inevitable nos, and so much more. Using Ann Byle's book "Chicken Scratch," we'll learn how to live a truly creative life, from finding your flock to handling henpecking to learning to breathe. Creative activities and hands-on application will help you deepen your creativity and find your creative sweet spot.

WS 02: Writing Engaging Nonfiction and Bible Studies

Presented by: Donna Snow

Your story matters, so it's important to tell it well. Let's learn how to shape your nonfiction idea into a clear, compelling Bible study, devotion, or journaling notebook. From the writing process to structure to voice, you'll gain the tools and confidence to turn your message into a manuscript that connects and inspires.

WS 03: Enduring on the Writer's Journey

Presented by: Rachel Hauck & Joy Massenburg

You've got a story to tell—but the noise of comparison and envy can get loud. It's no wonder you feel overwhelmed or stuck.

This workshop is for writers who want to create with God. So we're pairing soul-care with story craft to help you write from freedom instead of pressure.

WS 04: Editing as An Act of Love

Presented by: Ami McConnell

A finished manuscript is wonderful, but it's not the end of the process. Your manuscript must be edited. The prospect of an edit can feel scary.

Join me as we explore my editorial point of view. I'll challenge conventional thinking about editorial process, illuminating how this process can be satisfying, freeing your writing to be all that it can be.

Workshops 5-8: Friday - 3:15 pm - 4:15 pm

WS 05: Breathing Life into the Past: Writing Immersive Historical Fiction

Presented by: Cara Putman

This workshop explores how to find your story's spark by "Retelling Old Stories" and discovering unique historical angle. Attendees will dive deep into creating a dynamic, immersive setting, learning practical research strategies utilizing libraries, museums, and more. Finally, the session covers how to organize extensive historical research using tools like Scrivener or OneNote, ensuring your world-building remains consistent and your historical details serve the plot rather than slowing it down.

WS 06: From Spaghetti to Lasagna - Layering the Perfect Romantic Suspense

Presented by: Kate Angelo

In this interactive workshop, you'll learn how to layer character, romance, faith, and suspense so they unfold naturally under pressure. We'll break down common pitfalls and explore techniques for creating strong openings and escalating tension that you can apply immediately to your own manuscript. Beyond the craft, we'll discuss how to scale your "recipe" for different markets. By the end of this workshop, you'll understand how reader expectations should shape every storytelling choice you make.

WS 07: The Austen Method: Writing Romance According to Jane Austen

Presented by: Pepper Basham

Before there were tropes like enemies-to-lovers or second-chance romance, Jane Austen was already mastering them. She invented the templates modern romance still runs on. So how did she do it? What made her stories so irresistible that we're still reading them, watching them, and swooning over them two centuries later? Join author Pepper Basham as she pulls back the curtain on Austen's craft.

WS 08: Transform Your Author Career: Start a Podcast

Presented by: Rebecca Reed, Rebecca Yauger, and Melissa LaShure

This session explores how podcasting serves as a powerful career accelerator for authors by creating industry connections, and professional opportunities beyond book sales, with actionable steps to launch your own show aligned with your career goals.

Friday Workshops

Workshops 9-12: Friday - 4:30 pm - 5:30 pm

WS 09: Creating Successful Author Events

Presented by: Allie Pleiter

Events can be a great way to reach new readers and deepen connections with your fans. Whether online or in-person, a writer needs smart strategies to maximize effort and impact. Bestselling author Allie Pleiter has over two decades of experience hosting Facebook takeovers, retail store signings, online gatherings, and host of other creative events. Learn how to launch your book with a bang, and how to keep excitement high in those crucial first months—and beyond.

WS 10: Don't Break the Bank or Your Foot

Presented by: Dr. Ronda Wells

Come and be walked along the bumpy road to independent publishing with a detailed step-by-step approach, and how to avoid the potholes!

WS 11: Your First Five Pages

Presented by: Angela Hunt

Did you know that editors and agents and book buyers often make decisions about whether or not to purchase a manuscript or book after reading only the first five pages? Those pages are the most crucial in any novel, so are yours the absolute best they can be? The first five pages have so much work to do—hook the reader, establish your protagonist, identify the genre, POV, and tense, and reveal the writer's voice. Most important, the first five pages must prove that you know the craft and can tell a terrific story. Angela Hunt, author of more than 170 books, knows the power of those first five pages, and she will help you make yours the best they can be!

WS 12: Intro to Kid Lit Book Proposals with a Picture Book Emphasis

Presented by: Jennifer Jahn

This session is designed to introduce attendees to the importance of mastering the book proposal, removing the intimidation factor, tips for finding book comps, and beefing up the “network and promotion” section.



NEW BOOK FOR ACFW

THE EDGES OF REALITY

Tapestry of Grace | Book One

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From the author of *The Genesis Trust* trilogy.

Discover the new series

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Saturday Workshops

Workshops 13-16: Saturday - 10:45 am - 11:45 am

WS 13: Publishing Contract Basics for Indie & Trad Authors

Presented by: Rick Acker & Steve Laube

Veteran agent Steve Laube and attorney & author Rick Acker team up to provide an overview of key contract provisions for both traditional and indie authors.

WS 14: Do You Need a Hero? We have a panel of them!

Presented by: Angie Hunt

Our heroes panel will feature real life Memphis heroes—people who know about being a detective, a cop, a mayor, a prison warden, a paramedic, a firefighter, and more! Come with your questions and get real answers from authentic experts. It would be helpful if you submitted your questions early to Angie Hunt (hunthaven@gmail.com). Don't worry about getting the details wrong—get your answers from genuine heroes. (If you submit your question early, be sure to mention the heroes panel in your email.)

WS 15: Kiss and Tell: Writing Kisses That Matter

Presented by: Pepper Basham & Bethany Turner

In this lively workshop, award-winning authors Pepper Basham and Bethany Turner will explore the polarizing art of kissing (in our writing, that is) by teaching seven essential guidelines for writing kisses that matter.

WS 16: Make Your Fiction Sparkle

Presented by: Carol Post

Grip your readers with stories that radiate energy and emotion and don't let them go, even long after "The End."

Workshops 17-20: Saturday - 3:30 pm - 4:30 pm

WS 17: Research Like A Pro

Presented by: Joni Fisher

This workshop is a crash course in investigative journalism, examining the importance, methods, and sources of research, combined with the application of memory and imagination to deepen storytelling

WS 18: Story Spark

Presented by: Tara Johnson

This workshop delves into the tools of psychology to craft a new alternative to creating riveting plots and complicated characters. Explore the third strand of the story braid —character wounds and the spiritual thread— that will make your story shine.

WS 19 10 Things I Like About You: Agent & Client POV

Presented by: Stephanie Alton & Monika Kirkland

Agent Stephanie Alton with The Blythe Daniel Agency, Inc. and client Monika Kirkland offer an inside look at the ten things agents and authors work through day to day and book to book.

WS 20: Get a Great Start as an Indie

Presented by: Sara Turnquist

Indie Publishing has become a viable way of getting your story out into the world, but there are some things you need to know to put your best foot (or book) forward.



Awards



2025 Genesis Winners

*left to right: Elizabeth Daghfal (Contemporary), Ruth Schmeckpeper (Romance)
Tracy Del Campo (Short Novel), Donna Yarborough (Historical Romance), Tiffany Burgess (Novella)*



2025 Carol Award Winners

*left to right: Serena B. Miller (Romance), John W. Otte (Speculative)
Lynette Eason (Romantic Suspense)*

2025 First Impressions Winners

The First Impressions contest gives unpublished writers the opportunity to have the first five pages of their Christian fiction manuscript evaluated by an industry professional.

Contemporary

Alisa Hall

Historical

Lakeshia Heeringa

Historical Romance

Marilyn Brandon

Mystery/Suspense/Thriller

Will Eason

Romance

Jen Brown

Romantic Suspense

Breana Johnson

Short Novel

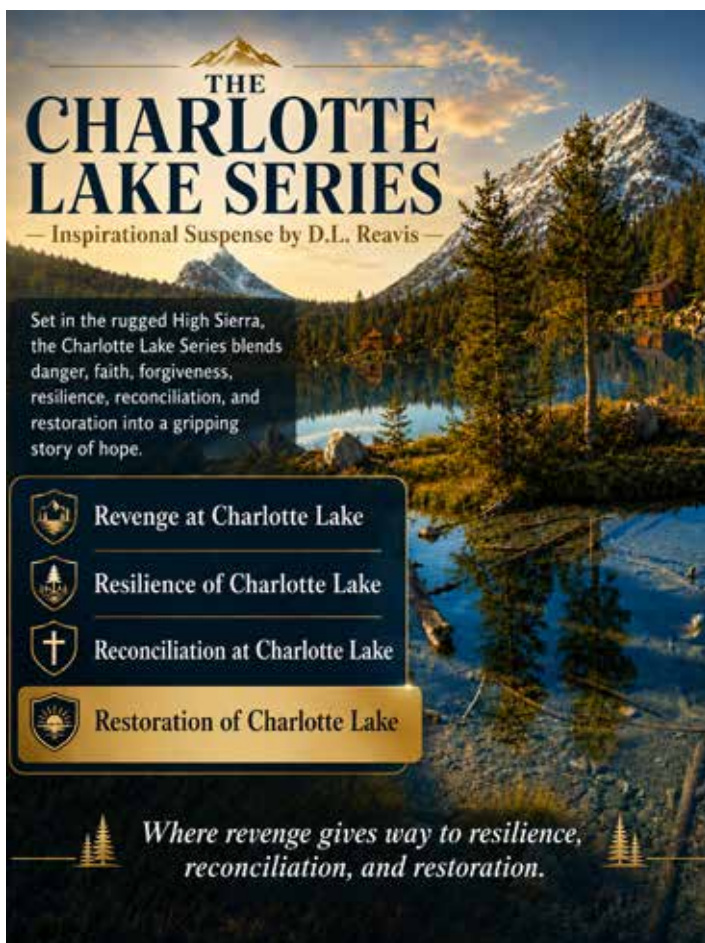
Breana Johnson

Speculative

Elizabeth Anne Myrick

Young Adult

Asheritah Ciuciu



2025 ACFW Award Recipients



*2025 Lifetime Achievement Award Winner
Robin Jones Gunn*



*2025 Volunteer of the Year
Pat Takamiya*



For more years than we can count, one of our faithful ACFW members has served us by sharing a Verse of the Week and short devotional every Monday. So many times the verse and story she chose ministered very specifically and profoundly to our membership. The impact of this woman and her faithfulness will long resound through the ACFW community. That's one of the reasons we're honoring our friend and fellow author, Martha Rogers, who recently went home to Jesus. Our traditional Member Service Award will now be known as the ACFW Martha Rogers Member Service Award.

2025 Recipient: Paula Peckham

2026 Genesis Contest Semifinalists

The Genesis Contest is the ACFW contest for unpublished Christian fiction writers. Genesis has a number of categories/genres to enter, the opportunity for unbiased feedback on writers' work by published authors and experienced judges, and the chance for the category finalists to have their work read by Christian publishing house editors and literary agents. ACFW has been pleased to see many previous category winners and finalists move further in their writing careers to become published authors.

Contemporary

Kate Breckinridge
Elise Browning
Alisa Hall
Farrah Lee Journey
Kate Mackereth
Louise Braswell Martin
Sarah Nichols

Novella

Lakeisha Heeringa
Gil Kissling
Regina McMorris
Suzanne Montgomery
Bill Quimby
(*Double Semifinalist*)
Laura M. Wallace

Speculative

Sara C. Anderson
Faith Behrens
Kimberly Cornelius
(*Double Semifinalist*)
Amy King
Melissa Myers
Timothy T. Scot

Historical

Annika Bergen Campbell
Chuck Carr
Bryan Harsh
Terri Miller
Sophie Neville
A.K. Nicolae
Shannon Skaer

Romance

Elizabeth Hunter
Amy King
Martha Ladyman
Grace Lakin
Sarah Lynne
Tiffany Miller
Madison Unruh

Young Adult

M. A. Bellers
Allison Cook
Kimberly Cornelius
William DeWitt
Valerie Fentress
Elise Haroldson
Kelley Way

Historical Romance

Megan Briggs
Jessica Gustafson
Amy King
(*Double Semifinalist*)
Elizabeth Reed
Megan Southon
Dawn Caldwell De Wulf

Romantic Suspense

Marilyn Brandon
Cherie Fresonke
Jess Noble
Lynda Page
Brittney Peek
(*Double Semifinalist*)
Laurie Ingram Sibley

Mystery/Suspense/ Thriller

(*tie for 7th place*)
Lindsay Arrowood
Joseph Atwood
Marylin Brandon
Julie Burke
Will Eason
Jeffrey Friedel
Martha Ladyman
Patty Royal

Short Novel

George Brooks
Anne Connors
Kevin Jaemz
J.D. Pfund
Laura Elizabeth Salas
Audrey Wyatt Shrive
Dave Sprecher

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Grim



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ACFW Chapters

Name	Location	Region
ACFW NY/NJ	New Jersey/New York	Northeast
ACFW Virginia	Leesburg, VA	Mid-Atlantic
ACFW Alabama	Huntsville, AL	Southeast
ACFW Central Florida	Longwood, FL	Southeast
ACFW Charlotte	Charlotte, NC	Southeast
ACFW Georgia	Acworth, GA	Southeast
ACFW South Carolina Lowcountry	Mt. Pleasant, SC	Southeast
ACFW Upstate South Carolina	Simpsonville, SC	Southeast
ACFW Chicago	South Barrington, IL	Midwest
ACFW Great Lakes	Michigan	Midwest
ACFW Indiana	Indiana	Midwest
ACFW Minnesota	Minneapolis, MN	Midwest
ACFW WI Southeast	Brookfield, WI	Midwest
ACFW NW Arkansas	Springdale, AR	Southwest
ACFW DFW	Arlington, TX	Southwest
ACFW Louisiana	Bossier City, LA	Southwest
ACFW Oklahoma City	Edmond, OK	Southwest
ACFW Tulsa	Tulsa, OK	Southwest
ACFW The Woodlands	The Woodlands, TX	Southwest
ACFW MozArks	Springfield, MO	Central
ACFW St. Louis	Festus, MO	Central
ACFW Colorado Springs	Colorado Springs, CO	Rocky Mountains
ACFW Northwest	WA/OR/ID/AK	Northwest
ACFW Arizona	Phoenix, AZ	West
ACFW California	Southern California	West
ACFW Kentucky	Louisville, Lexington, and Elizabethtown, KY	Ohio Valley
ACFW Knoxville	Knoxville, KY	Ohio Valley
ACFW Memphis	Memphis, TN	Ohio Valley
ACFW Mid-Tennessee	Nashville, TN	Ohio Valley
ACFW Ohio	Ohio	Ohio Valley
ACFW Beyond the Borders	Worldwide	Beyond the Borders
ACFW Kid-Lit (Children's Authors)	Online	Specialty

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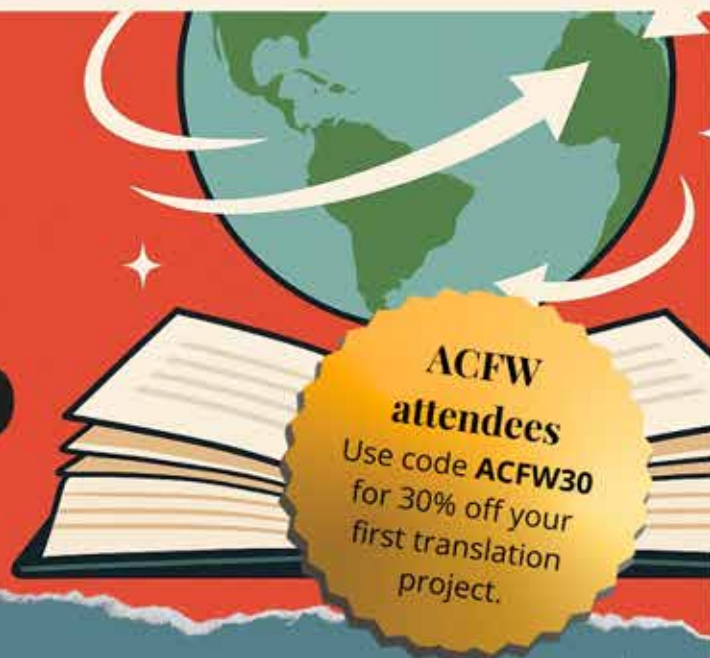


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WELCOME!

*Welcome to Storyfest...
the place where readers and authors connect!*

Whether you're returning or this is your first time, we're so happy to have you join us. You'll soon discover that as valuable as the planned events here are, they form only a fraction of what you'll gain at Storyfest. What happens in the halls, over meals, in the bookstore, and in casual conversations while in the elevator may well become your most memorable moments of the year's Storyfest.

How can you make the most of your time at Storyfest?

BE BRAVE. Introduce yourself to other readers—and to authors. You never know when you might discover a new reader friend or a new favorite author or genre.

FEEL AT HOME. This is designed for YOU! Authors are eager to mingle with you, meet you, and participate in events for you to get to know them better.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE NEW JOINT CONTINUING EDUCATION SESSION. This new session, for the first time ever open to readers, on Friday morning was created with authors and readers learning together in mind.

REACH OUT. We're here for you. Dig deep. Listen well. What you hear may very well be words you needed to hear.

We're delighted you've joined us. We hope you have a marvelous time. Don't forget to visit the bookstore often...blind date a book...buy Christmas presents...buy birthday presents...and attend the multi-author booksigning on Saturday morning. (Hint: autographed books make for WONDERFUL presents)

Grateful you came,

The ACFW and Storyfest Staff

STORYFEST AGENDA

Thursday, August 27, 2026

Time	Event	Location
9:00 am – 4:00 pm	Registration	<i>Grand Ballroom Foyer</i>
8:00 am – 6:00 pm	Bookstore	<i>Continental Ballroom</i>
6:30 pm	Milestones Dinner (Storyfest Readers invited with special author-hosted tables)	<i>Grand Ballroom ABC</i>

Friday, August 28, 2026

Time	Event	Location
8:00 am – 12:00 noon	Registration	<i>Grand Ballroom Foyer</i>
8:00 am – 12:15 pm	Bookstore	<i>Continental Ballroom</i>
9:15 am – 12:15 pm	Continuing Education Session 04 with Jaime Jo Wright	<i>Hernando DeSoto</i>
12:30 pm – 1:30 pm	Lunch (Storyfest Readers invited with special author-hosted tables)	<i>Grand Ballroom ABC</i>
2:00 pm – 3:00 pm	Author Panels	<i>Ben Hollander</i>
3:15 pm – 5:15 pm	Scavenger Hunt with fellow readers	<i>Ben Hollander</i>
6:00 pm – 9:00 pm	Interactive Pizza Party with Authors	<i>Plantation Roof & Skywalk</i>

Saturday, August 29, 2026

Time	Event	Location
8:00 am – 9:00 am	Registration	<i>Grand Ballroom Foyer</i>
9:00 am – 10:30 pm	Multi-author Book Signing	<i>Continental Ballroom</i>
3:30 pm – 4:30 pm	Storyfest Fun	<i>Ben Hollander</i>
4:30 pm – 5:30 pm	Photo Booth in Bookstore	<i>Continental Ballroom</i>
6:00 pm – 9:30 pm	ACFW Annual Awards Gala (OPTIONAL ADD-ON)	<i>Grand Ballroom ABC</i>
6:00 pm – 7:30 pm	Dinner	
7:45 pm – 9:30 pm	Awards Presentation	

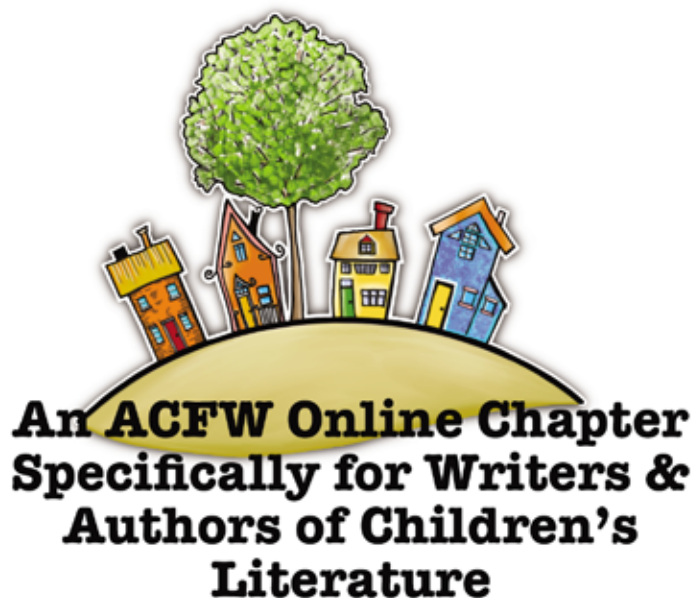


ACFW KIDLIT ONLINE CHAPTER

ACFW KidLit

- Monthly Speakers - Most every 4th Tuesday of the month except December and during ACFW Conference months.
- \$11 annual dues for KidLit Chapter.
- ACFW National Membership required.
- Annual KidLit Writing Contest.
- Exclusive private FB group.

ACFW KIDLIT Annual Summer Contest



Membership Application:

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Kingdom KidLit Contest

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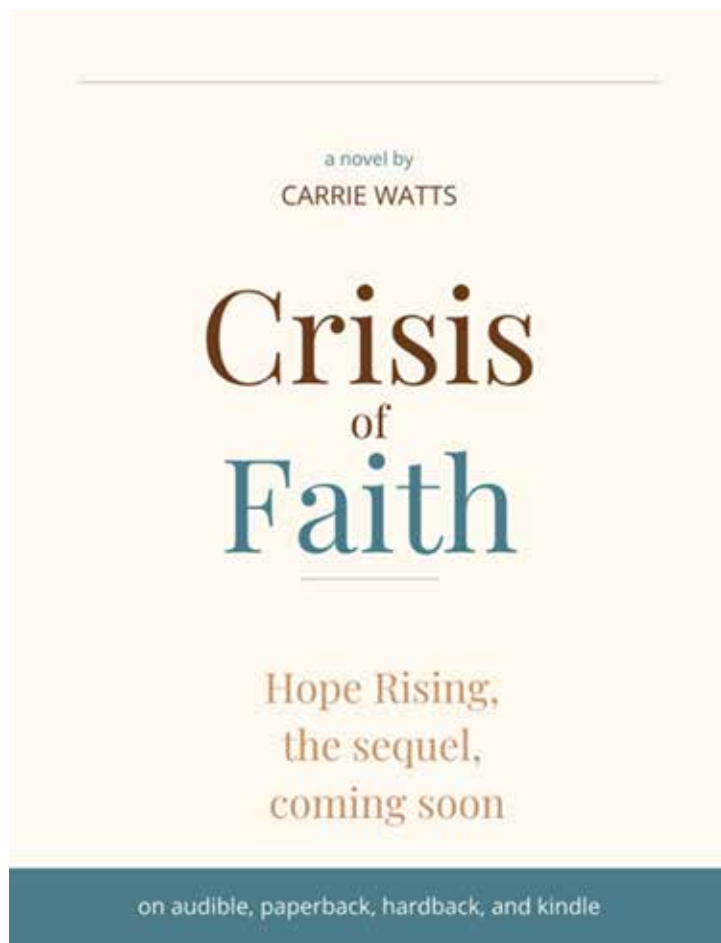
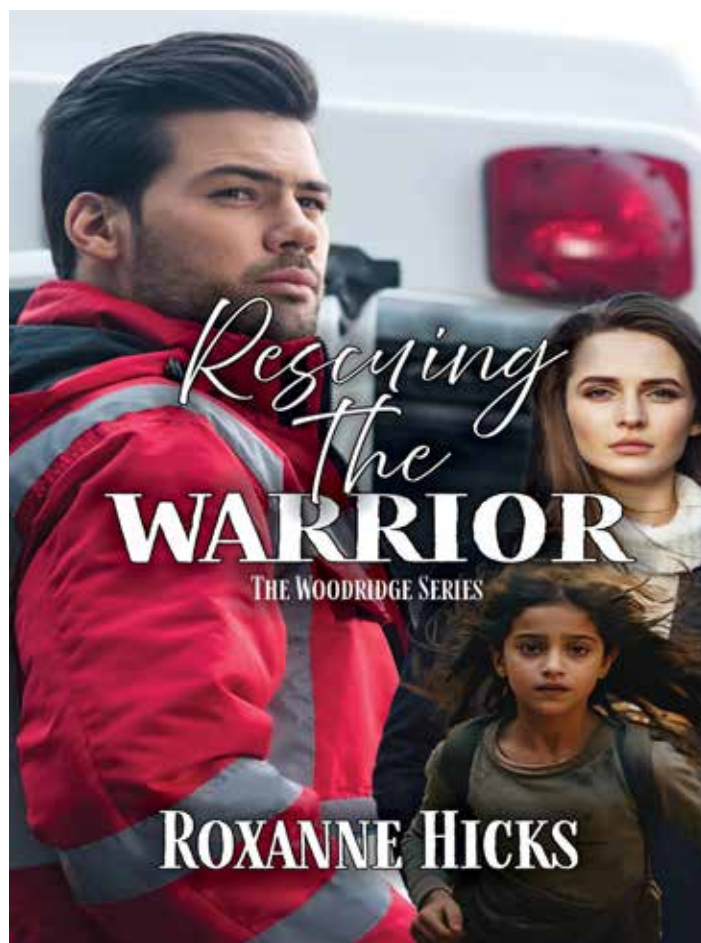
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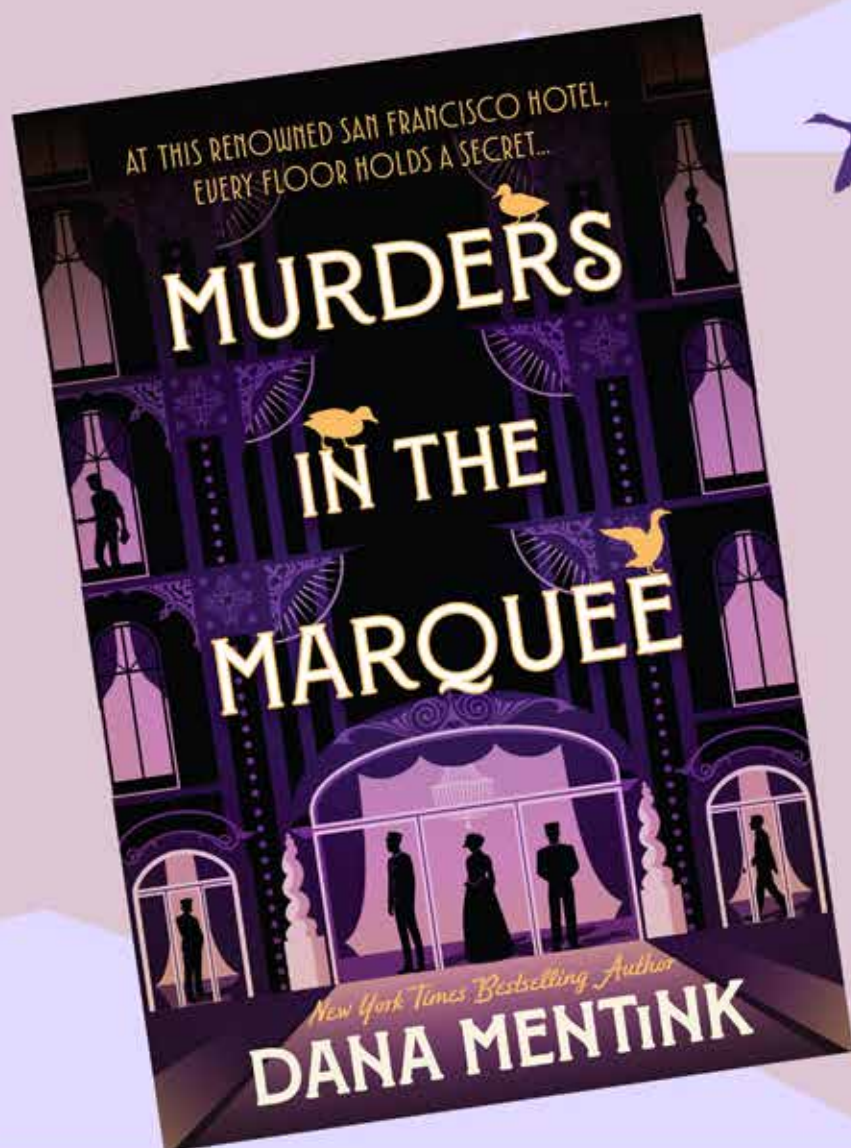
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