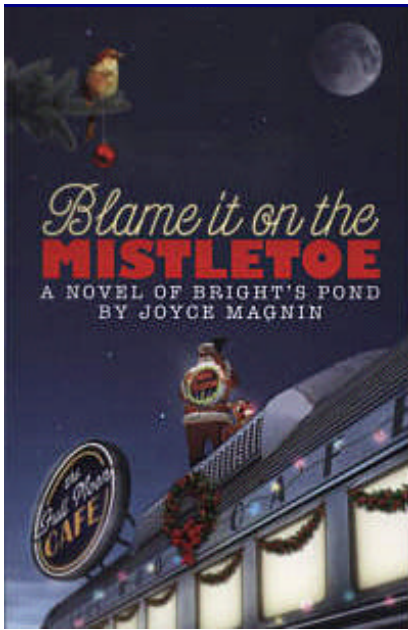


### The Silence of Gethsemane

by Michel Benoît  
publ by Alma Books from Gardners Books  
in Paperback  
at £12.99 (978-1-846-88179-4) Mar 2012

A challenging novel. Firstly, how do you approach the story of the ministry of Jesus written in the first person when traditionally you have accepted the knowledge that Jesus never wrote anything? Then as you read, this is a story akin to the 'historical Jesus' not the Son of God. There is no acknowledgement of 'I am the Son of God', just a man identifying his relationship with the God of Israel, and what he has to do to express that knowledge to others in his role as a rabbi. I felt that this particular development of understanding gave pointers to anyone's development of a relationship with God because of its starting point of human rather than incarnate Christ. I also liked the explanations of Jewish society and religious laws which gave a greater understanding of the way Jesus changed the way of thinking from the strict Jewish laws to the new way of Christianity. The writing style is interesting as it somehow forces the reader into a slower pace of reading which assists both understanding, and the possibility of developing one's own thoughts on the matter described. Michel Benoît, originally a scientist, then a member of a Benedictine order until he left because of his 'ideological non-conformity', has not written a cosy 'biography' of Jesus. Only you, the reader, can decide whether you accept the challenge to look afresh at the man named Jesus.

Notes by [Carole Burrows](#)



### Blame it On the Mistletoe

A Novel of Bright's Pond – The fourth Bright's Pond book

by Joyce Magnin  
publ by Abingdon Press from Alban Books  
in Paperback  
at £9.99 (978-1-426-71162-6) Dec 2011

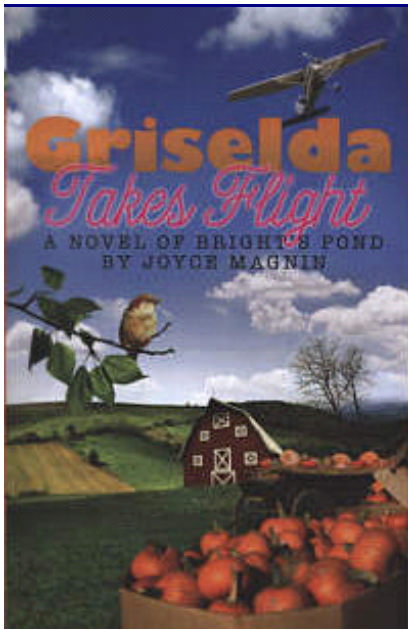
Receiving this book gave me the opportunity to read through what I have said about the previous - books. (No-one else gets the chance to review these, I love them too much!) I see I have used the word 'quirky' before so I looked it up in my Thesaurus and the list of words there includes eccentric, unconventional, unorthodox, unusual, strange and many more exactly describing many of the characters Joyce Magnin weaves into her stories, and yet if you look around your own communities the term could fit some people there too, and this is the joy of these tales, they are believable. -

Griselda and her large sister Agnes play a major part in - Blame it on the Mistletoe - as there are odd happenings at Greenbriers the Nursing Home where Agnes now resides in an endeavour to loose weight. Griselda is still having flying lessons from Cliff, and Zeb, Griselda's on/off boyfriend has decided at last that he is ready for marriage which puts Griselda in a spin. -

Add in familiar friends from the Paradise Caravan Park, and the usual Bright's Pond residents plus a family from the backwoods and you have another book that keeps you reading till the last page when you give a sigh of pure pleasure and long for the next story! Please keep writing Joyce! -

You can read any - Bright's Pond - book on their own but if you have read the previous titles you will enjoy each of them all the more.

Notes by [Mary Bartholomew](#)



### Griselda Takes Flight

A Novel of Bright's Pond - The third Bright's Pond book.

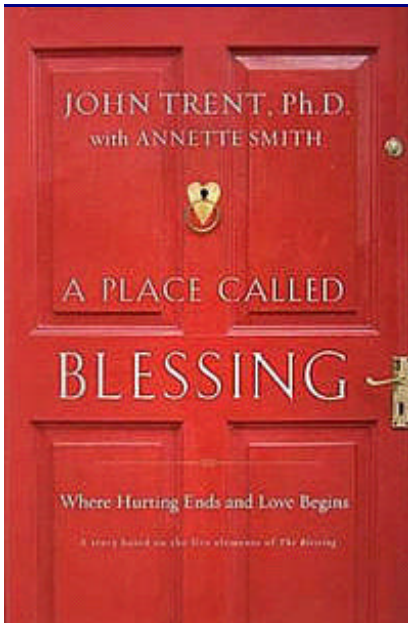
by Joyce Magnin  
publ by Abingdon Press from Alban Books  
in Paperback  
at £8.99 (978-1-426-71157-2) Apr 2011

'Now that her morbidly obese sister Agnes Sparrow, is comfortably dieting at the Greenbrier Nursing Home, Griselda learns to fly....' so starts the r&eacute;sum&eacute; on the back cover. -

Griselda is the town's librarian but has a fairly relaxed attitude to opening hours and is enjoying the freedom now she is not at the beck and call of her sister Agnes, though she visits her frequently. On the day her friend Stella asks to go with her to Greenbrier to speak to Agnes, they see a light plane flying low over the town and landing on a nearby hilltop most unusual! Stella has been told that her estranged brother, Walter, is lying in a coma at Greenbrier. She needs to consult with Agnes, considered by the locals to be something of an oracle, as she feels a bitter resentment for her brother from an incident ten years before and doesn't want him back in her life – but it appears that she is next of kin. Oh dear! -

On their return to Bright's Pond and the Full Moon Caf&eacute; where 'everyone' seems to congregate, they hear about a newcomer to the town Gilda, who turns out to be the injured Walter's lady friend. Throw in Griselda's friend Zeb, the Caf&eacute; owner, Stella's husband Nate and his hopefully prize-winning pumpkin Bertha Ann, a handful of other local characters and not forgetting the pilot of the mystery plane and you are all set for another thoroughly entertaining read. It won't spoil your enjoyment of the story if you are not familiar with previous Bright's Pond novels, but I did enjoy spotting familiar characters.

Notes by [Mary Bartholomew](#)



### A Place Called Blessing

Where Hurting Ends and Love Begins

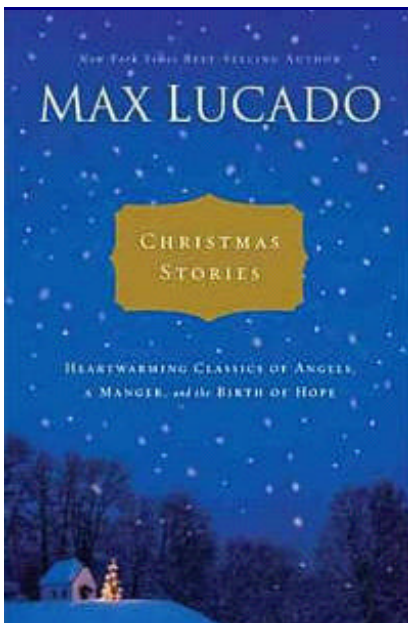
by John Trent with Annette Smith  
publ by Thomas Nelson  
in Paperback  
at £9.99 (978-0-849-94618-9) 03/05/2011

An orphaned boy's story of loss, love, and eventual acceptance by the most unlikely people, is the core of a piece of fiction. The story chronicles the life of Josh, an emotionally abandoned little boy who loses his mother and father and is separated from two brothers. He is shuffled through the foster care system, unpacking his scant belongings at many houses, but never staying long due to his deep-seated fears and issues. At six years old, when it finally seems as though Josh might be forever reunited with his brothers, an unfortunate accident changes the course of his life. -

Through adolescence Josh often acts out in anger and trusts no one, but through the first person narrative the reader gets to see a glimpse of the broken little boy who so desperately wants to be loved. As Josh turns eighteen he rents a room from a mother and son who turn out to be the family he is so desperately searching for. The journey they take together is painful and difficult, but Josh eventually finds the peace he seeks. -

I very much appreciated the message of this book, especially the inside look at orphaned children and the foster care system. There is ache and honesty in this journey of themes surrounding foster care or adoption. It gives the reader a thoughtful portrayal, from a child's perspective.

Notes by [Johnny Douglas](#)



### Christmas Stories

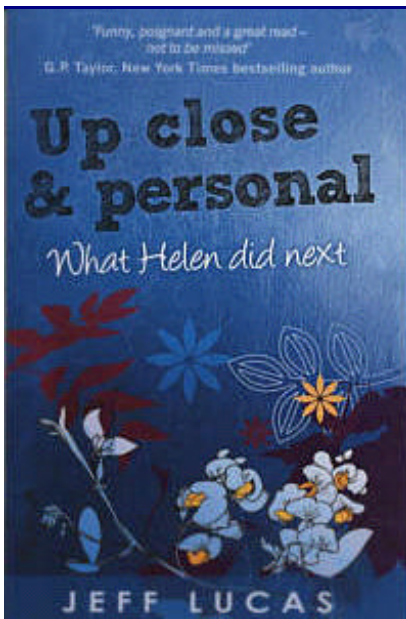
Heartwarming Classics of Angels, A Manger and the Birth of Hope

by Max Lucado  
publ by Thomas Nelson  
in Hardback  
at £11.99 (978-1-401-68543-0) Aug 2011

Lucado pens in such a distinctive fashion. Here comes a compilation of Christmas stories by the prolific Max Lucado celebrating the joy and wonder of the Christmas season. Some of these titles have been previously published, but are well worth a re-read. They are sweet, indeed at times very sweet! -

Max Lucado does write powerfully and with inspiration. It's no literary classic and yet it is engaging and emotionally a tear-jerker! Jacob's Gift was my personal favourite of the novellas amidst this brief tour. Pithy and of value, but alas it might have been so much more.

Notes by [Johnny Douglas](#)



## Up Close & Personal

What Helen Did Next

by Jeff Lucas  
publ by Authentic Media  
in Paperback  
at £7.99

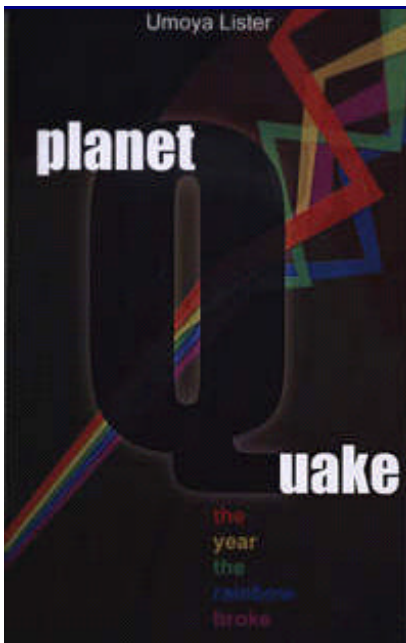
(978-1-850-78888-1)

Summer 2011

Jeff Lucas has done it again! – With a little help from Tamsin Kendrick and no doubt other females around him. -

As you read, you are completely absorbed by the story; you can really believe that you are reading another volume of - Helen Sloane's Diary. - - Helen's Dad has been killed, knifed in a street robbery he was trying to prevent. Her beloved leaders at NWCF, New Wave Christian Fellowship, are moving to a new area, and her love life is non-existent. She has some good friends, male and female, but life at the moment is pretty rocky. She has issues with her senior social worker and with more than one client; in fact she is a pretty average young woman with particular difficulties at the moment. - Helen writes so honestly – yes Helen, you forget this is fiction – she writes of her feelings, the happenings day to day, the saga of finding a new leader for the church (and that is not straight forward believe me!) her ongoing grief at her father's death and so much more. I read till the small hours and settled to sleep with a smile on my face.

Notes by [Mary Bartholomew](#)



## PlanetQuake

The Year the Rainbow Broke

by Umoya Lister  
publ by Highland Books  
in Paperback  
at £7.99 (978-1-897-91384-0) 2010

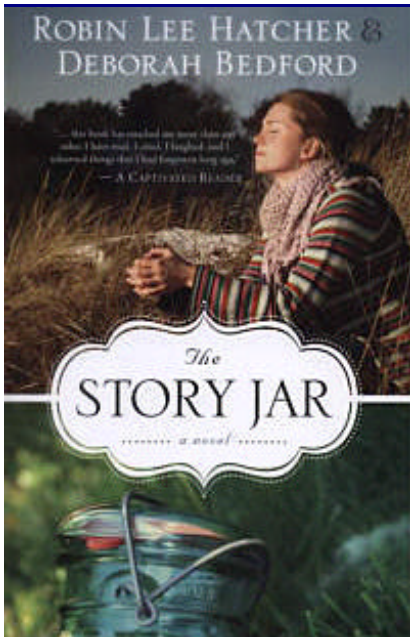
Christian Fiction- General ? Or should I put this book into Climate Change? The book describes itself as 'Geofiction' and it really is quite a book! -

A rich mixture of disaster in the not too far future, scientific research exposing climate change, weather patterns completely disrupted, panic among governments and people, food riots, fear of food hoarding, starvation in parts of Africa, criminal intrigue, and a young family caught up in it all. A young family with strong Christian beliefs, tried almost beyond their endurance by the evil surrounding a charismatic personality who is intent on ruling a united Africa free from Arabs and Whites, regardless of the suffering inflicted by his schemes. -

The author's name is disguised by a pseudonym, but they must surely be a very knowledgeable individual as the book is full of scientific talk, theological discussion and quotations from the Bible and much more of interest. Don't be put off by this! It all enhances the story which is truly exciting in a scary way, as it could all so easily happen. -

I did not start reading with any enthusiasm, but almost immediately was hooked, and wished I had the opportunity to read on and on. Nevertheless it didn't take many days to finish it despite being quite a tome of 511 pages. Highly recommended.

Notes by [Mary Bartholomew](#)

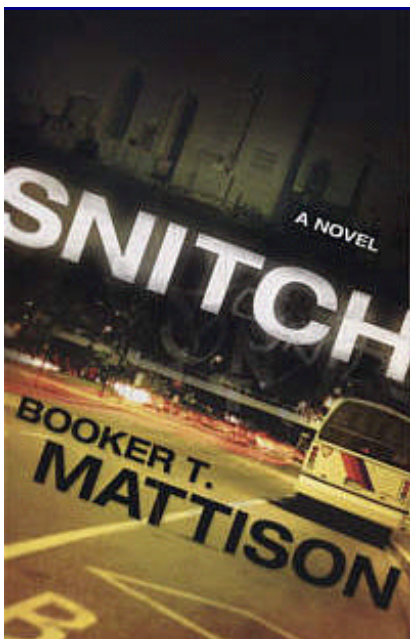


### The Story Jar

by Robin Lee Hatcher & Deborah Bedford  
publ by Hendrickson from Alban Books  
in Paperback  
at £9.99 (978-1-598-56665-9) Apr 2011

A jar can be used for jam, or for collecting coins for charity, or, as in this inspirational book, as a container and preserver of precious memories. - This skilfully crafted novel blends the stories of three women and the mementoes which symbolised turning points in their lives. It would appeal particularly to mothers, and would also have resonance with anyone coping with cancer or finding difficulties with adolescent children. - Penned with vitality and credibility I found this book extremely readable, unusual and memorable. I could not help but be moved, occasionally to tears, by the warmth of God's love embracing and suffusing the lives of the three very different women portrayed. - Two talented women writers have succeeded in producing a faith-enhancing book which you will want others to read.

Notes by Margaret Walker

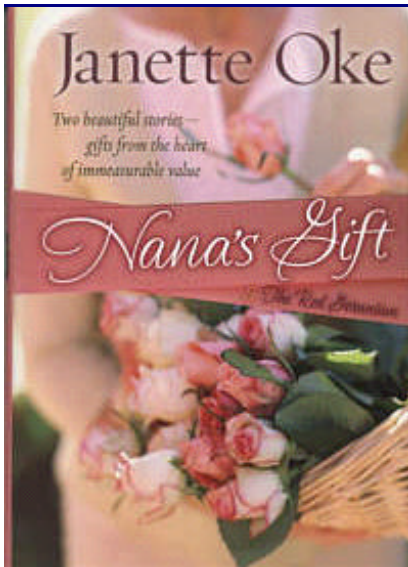


### Snitch

by Booker T Mattison  
publ by Revell imprint of Baker Pub from Lion  
in Paperback  
at £8.99 (978-0-800-73396-4) Jul 2011

Written, surely, to appeal to young, black urban-dwellers, this fast-paced novel is set in the culture of gang warfare and the illicit drugs trade, in Jersey City, near New York. The characters are mainly men who are either deeply set in the gang life-style, have renounced it, or (like the protagonist) have fallen into the situation of being a reluctant, failed father and feckless would-be husband; added to this are the aggrieved grandparents, and a psychotherapist, who seemingly come from an African-American elite, who have raised themselves by hard work or education. Thus, the book presents a series of differing possibilities as to the alternatives and choices set before originally-underprivileged American black people, and the reality of Christian faith as the authentic route to those choices. At times I failed to understand the language entirely ("hood" is simply short for neighbourhood, I finally realised, not something to do with gangsters), but that, presumably, shows the book's authenticity. Perhaps this is a suitable book for the church youth library - young people would surely get the language better than us oldies.

Notes by John Thomas



### Nana's Gift

and The Red Geranium

by Jeanette Oke  
publ by Hendrickson from Alban Books  
in Hardback  
at £9.99 (978-1-598-56662-8)

27/04/2011

Two short stories first published in 1996 and 1995 respectively, by Bethany House Publishers. -

- Nana's Gift - is a heart warming tale of a lifetime of loving between a couple, and the husbands gift of a real pearl necklace, the result of scrimping and saving against all odds, to show his love and appreciation of his wife. -

When she is widowed the pearls remain as a treasured memory of that love which Lizzie shares with her daughters and one particular granddaughter in a special way. -

- The Red Geranium - is quite a short story, but equally poignant, about a small boy and his grandmother now living in a Home instead of the house he knew so well. -

This little book would make an ideal present for anyone who loves short stories.

Notes by [Mary Bartholomew](#)



### Solomon's Song

by Sarah De Carvalho  
publ by Hodder and Stoughton  
in Paperback  
at £8.99 (978-1-444-70188-3)

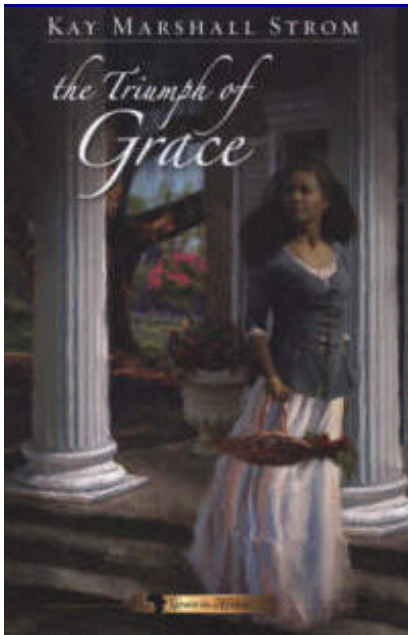
May 2011

The rather drab cover does not immediately attract attention, but the contents are gold dust. The author is known for her work among the street children of Brazil: she knows what she is talking about. -

Solomon is a young boy with a wonderful gift for music. He can play the piano with skill far beyond his age, and sings like an angel. He also has a lovely personality. From a very humble, farming family in a beautiful valley nestling below his beloved mountains there would appear that nothing could go wrong, but by a quirk of history, the land does not belong to his family and when a crook posing as a helpful lawyer cons his father, they lose everything. His drunken Uncle, with whom his grandfather lives, remains on his share of the land, while Solomon's family have to move to the city, into the comfortless slum home of his Mother's brother. -

As this story plays out we are introduced to Keira from a wealthy ranching family. She has her problems too, quite different of course, but the way these two main characters lives finally join up makes for an absorbing read, highly recommended.

Notes by [Mary Bartholomew](#)



### The Triumph of Grace

Grace in Africa Book 3

by Kay Marshall Strom  
publ by Abingdon Press from Alban Books  
in Paperback  
at £8.99 (978-1-426-70213-6)

Mar 2011

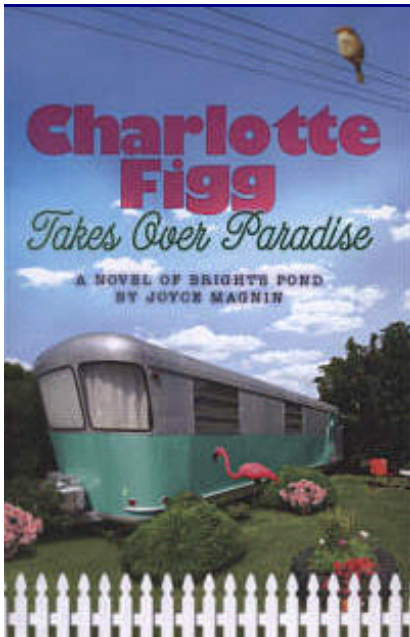
I was looking forward to this final book of the trilogy but it has not been comfortable reading from the start and this is no different. Compulsive yes, you have to keep turning the pages, but this is the raw telling of what slavery meant to all who were involved in the trading of African slaves to America, as if they were animals with no human feelings, just commodities to be treated however their white masters willed. Sadly it also brings into the light how Africans treated their fellow Africans. -

Grace is working in the Foundling Hospital in London, when she is arrested on false charges on the direction of her friend Charlotte's evil husband Lord Reginald. It is an exciting development that sees her on a ship bound for America, but the avarice of an evil white man enslaves her yet again. -

The title of this book is what kept my hope of a happy ending alive, but so much happens to Grace and to her husband Cabeto before then. Their separate stories are told, as are the stories of those in England and Africa that we have come to know through the previous books. -

Despite my reluctance to be confronted by the issues raised, I am so glad I read this trilogy and highly recommend it.

Notes by [Mary Bartholomew](#)



### Charlotte Figg Takes Over Paradise

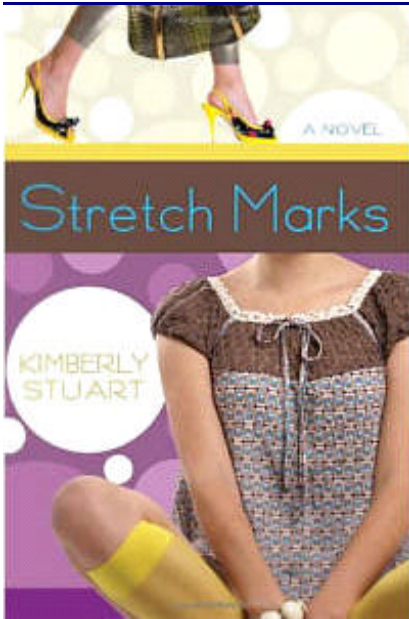
A Novel of Bright's Pond - The second Bright's Pond book

by Joyce Magnin  
publ by Abingdon Press from Alban Books  
in Paperback  
at £9.99 (978-1-426-70766-7)

Dec 2010

Quirky characters and a delightful plot with unexpected twists and turns – Joyce Magnin has done it again! - Paradise Trailer Park has a mixed collection of residents who although they live in close proximity to each other lead very separate lives, that is till Charlotte Figg and her dog Lucky come on the scene. - Charlotte's arrival in Paradise does not bode well for the future! Recently widowed, she has sold up her home to make a fresh start, expecting to find that she has bought a delightfully attractive mobile home although 'sight unseen'. The reality turns out to be a squalid dump of a place; she has been conned by the seeming owner of the park, an obnoxious individual named Fergus Wrinkel. - She attracts the attention of Rose, another resident, and things start to change. Charlotte, who played in a Softball team as a young woman, is persuaded to start a Softball team with the women of the park. That's when the fun starts. - A truly original story and a joy to read.

Notes by [Mary Bartholomew](#)



**Stretch Marks**

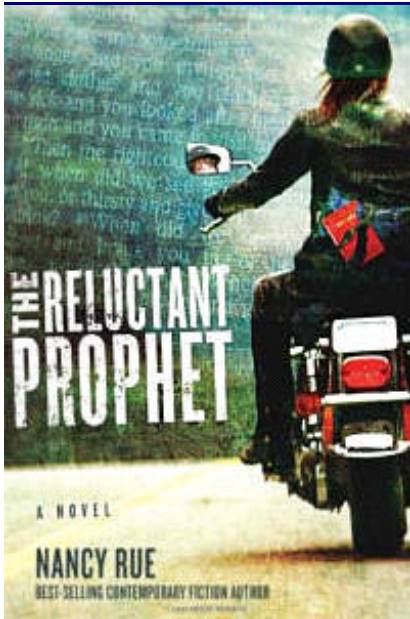
by Kimberly Stuart  
publ by Xlibris distributed by Gardners  
in Paperback  
at £11.99 (978-0-781-44892-5) 29/05/2009

The strap line for the book is... "When a daughter becomes a mother, can she learn to accept her own?" I was hoping this was going to be a fun Bridget Jones style book as the cover kind of gave it that impression, but actually what it is was a disappointment for me. I think the cover was trying to illustrate mum and daughter but I felt that it failed. Shame that, because with the right cover it could have altered the feel of the book. -

That aside I didn't find it a chore to read. It was quite short and the story flowed, I just felt something was missing and I wanted more. There was some humour in it but not enough for me. I know that this was set in the multi-cultural city of Chicago and the story was highlighting the difference between the daughter's new life and her upbringing but I felt it was over emphasising these differences too much for me. -

Don't let me put you off, because if you want some by the pool reading then I would suggest this book and then leave the book behind because unfortunately I didn't find this a keeper.

Notes by Zoë Stevenson



### The Reluctant Prophet

by Nancy Rue  
publ by Xlibris distributed by Gardners  
in Paperback  
at £9.99 (978-1-434-76496-6) 15/11/2010

I really enjoyed this one. I didn't know whether I was going to get into it from the beginning as the introduction to a Harley Davidson motorbike put me off a little, but I was interested to see just what the story was about. And I'm glad that I persisted with the first few chapters because by about a quarter of the way through I was hooked. -

Allison the main character who has the Harley, is like Joe Bloggs, a run of the mill Christian but I identified with her. Her desire is to not settle for less in life and this includes her walk with God and it is through her dissatisfaction with the complacency of church that she steps out in faith when she hears God's voice and then amazing things happen. I found myself quite envious of Allison as she had the guts to do what I would like to do but I haven't yet learnt to let go and let God in. What Allison does is real church. Hopefully you too will be challenged and encouraged when you read this novel.

Notes by [Zo&euml; Stevenson](#)

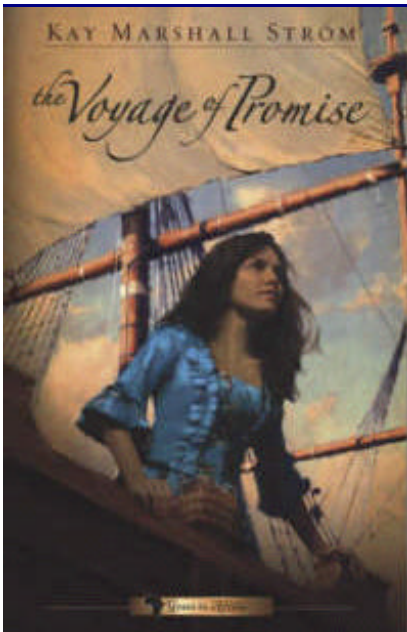


**Long Time Coming**

by Vanessa Miller  
publ by Abingdon Press from Alban Books  
in Paperback  
at £9.99 (978-1-426-70768-1) Dec 2010

A wonderful story that when I started reading didn't expect to like! -  
Two women from very different places in their lives, come together around the person of a bright lad, Jamal. Deirdre is the childless Head Mistress of a school in a US city, but it could as easily be set in the UK. She has never told her loving husband, an army sergeant, that she knows she is unlikely to have the children they both long for. Kenisha is the mother of three children by different fathers, struggling to bring them up in a spotless home, giving them love, teaching them and encouraging them to be upright citizens, against heavy odds – her family are dysfunctional to say the least. -  
Kenisha has not been feeling well and when she goes to a doctor is diagnosed as having terminal cancer. -  
This sets the scene for what follows. A complicated weaving together of two families lives, beautifully and movingly described without avoiding any of the serious issues.

Notes by [Mary Bartholomew](#)



## The Voyage of Promise

Grace in Africa Book Two

by Kay Marshall Strom  
publ by Abingdon Press from Alban Books  
in Paperback  
at £9.99 (978-1-426-70212-9) Nov 2010

The first book finished on such an upbeat, that it is distressing to find that Grace and her fellow captives freed from the Zulina slave fortress have been overwhelmed and captured again. -

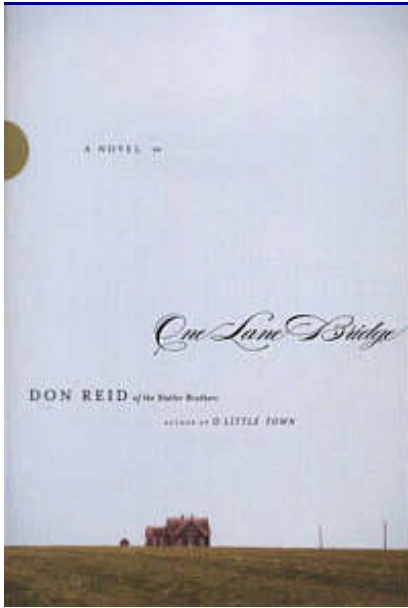
It is five years later, 1792, and the opening chapter paints a picture of a happy community; Grace and Cabeto have a little boy and all seems peaceful until in the night the slave trader's African warriors attack the village and horrific scenes ensue. Scenes that I found hard to read, but knew I had to. This may be fiction, but what is described must have really happened time and time again. -

The description of the families torn apart, the ships being overloaded, the treatment of these men and women has all been documented elsewhere, but reading this story brings it all harrowingly alive. -

Torn from her child and her husband, Grace is carried off to England and this is the story of the voyage and what happens to her in London. -

Will she ever see Cabeto again? The third in the trilogy is called - The Triumph of Grace - so there is still hope.

Notes by [Mary Bartholomew](#)



## One Lane Bridge

by Don Reid  
publ by Xlibris distributed by Gardners  
in Paperback  
at £9.99 (978-1-434-76508-6) 15/11/2010

An unusual story that kept me intrigued as to how it could possibly end satisfactorily – but it does! -

J.D. as he was always known and his wife Karlie had been teenage sweethearts, and after college returned to their home town of Hanson, North Carolina, USA where they opened a restaurant soon followed by another. At one of these they have a problem. Money is disappearing and it can only be an employee who is to blame. -

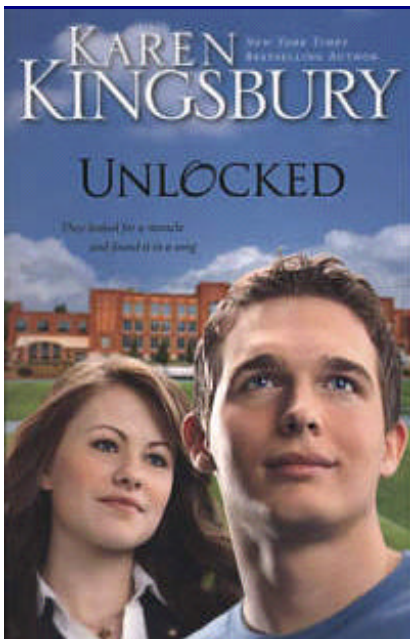
Their only child, a daughter has recently left home for college and J.Ds mother lives in a Home not far away. -

J.D. relaxes by driving off into the countryside with no particular destination and it is on one of these trips that he runs out of petrol near the - One Lane Bridge - of the title. -

From this moment on the story takes a surreal turn. J.D. finds himself in a time warp. The nearby house he goes to for help is not there when he returns to show his wife, nor is the one lane bridge.....

I'm not telling you more – but promise you a good read.

Notes by [Mary Bartholomew](#)

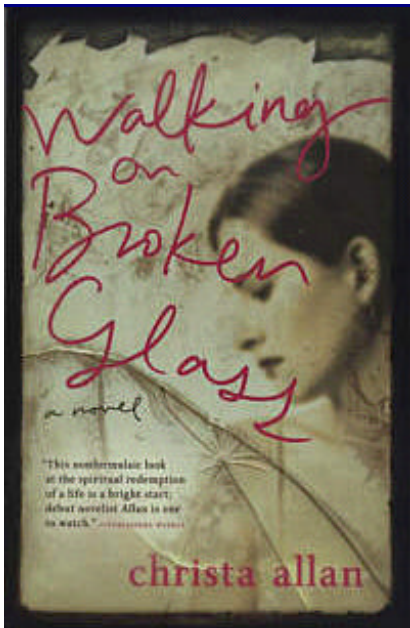


**Unlocked**

by Karen Kingsbury  
publ by Zondervan Publishing House  
in Paperback  
at £9.99 (978-0-310-26695-2) 06/10/2010

An incredibly moving story of an autistic boy and his childhood friend Ellie who both go to the same High School, Fulton High. -  
Their parents who used to be close friends were affected, more than they realised, by Holden's withdrawal into autism at the age of three,. The little girl Ellie, could not understand what was happening to her friend and Ellie's mum feared that contact with Holden would make Ellie withdraw as well, so kept away, losing contact with Holden's family when she and her family moved away. -  
Now in their senior years at High school, Ellie in with the 'in crowd', Holden in the special needs unit, they happen on each other and Ellie discovers why Holden seems so familiar. -  
From then on their lives and those of all around them slowly change in ways that can only be described as miracles from God.  
This is a story of bullying, misconceptions, compassion and love, of Holden's love of music retained from his childhood and the power of music to help him reach his full potential. -  
Finding inspiration in the true story of a young boy, Karen Kingsbury has woven one of her finest novels.

Notes by [Mary Bartholomew](#)



**Walking on Broken Glass**

by Christa Allan  
publ by Abingdon Press from Alban Books  
in Paperback  
at £8.99 (978-1-426-70227-3) Mar 2010

Leah is a woman who is struggling to deal with a difficult marital relationship – especially in the bedroom. As things move from bad to worse, she deals with it by emotionally divorcing herself from the situation by means of alcohol. This is where it becomes a story of hope and redemption. Into this bleak situation God sends a Christian friend to encourage her to deal with the problem as well as pray for her. -  
As their lives progress, we are moved by how Leah starts to trust God from day to day and how God changes her life and starts work in her husband. **WARNING:** Tissues may be needed.

Notes by [Charmaine Hill](#)