



2026 CCCA Awards of Merit – Guidelines

Please find below the guidelines and list of categories for 2026. The entry form is a separate document. Please read these guidelines carefully.

The 2026 awards will be presented at our May conference to be held at St. Paul's Bloor Street in Toronto at a date and time to be announced.

Entries must be submitted in **PDF format** to ccca.awards@gmail.com. Please package each of your entries individually: include submission pdf, entry form, indicate category, division and category number in the subject line.

If you are **mailing** your entries for the following categories: **General Excellence** category in magazines, newspapers and institutional publications, please send them to the address below:

CCCA 2026 Awards of Merit
8 MacDonald Avenue
Hamilton, ON L8P 4N5

The deadline for award entries is **March 13, 2026**. Each entry must be published **in the calendar year 2025**.

Those who enter more than two categories are allowed one free entry.

Entry Fees: *Please make cheques payable to **Canadian Christian Communicators Association (*in full*)** and mail to the above address or you can pay by e-transfer. Send your payment to cdnchristiancommunicators@gmail.com

For Circulation up to 9,999: \$20.00 for each entry

For Circulation 10,000 and over: \$25.00 for each entry

For Individuals: \$20.00 for each entry

For Student Award: \$15.00 per entry

A.C. Forrest Memorial Award: \$20.00 per entry



General CCCA Awards – Entry Guidelines

Entries can be from individual members of the Canadian Christian Communicators Association or from staff at member organizations. A few categories are based either on circulation or magazine/newspaper subdivisions. Ones with no subdivisions are open categories.

One can enter a **maximum of two entries into each category**. The two-entry maximum is per payee, so it could happen that a magazine enters two articles in a category and then a freelance CCCA member who published in that magazine could separately enter an article in the same category. In such a case all three entries would be judged, but CCCA reserves the right to apply the “one win per publication or per individual” rule in awarding placement (1st, 2nd, etc.). If an individual and a publication inadvertently enter redundant items into a category, the CCCA will notify both parties so one can retract their entry. There is no restriction on submitting the same item into multiple categories (e.g., a single photo entered in photo category, photo spread, and layout & design entry).

Most categories are for **original content**. They may be staff-generated or first rights publication from a freelancer. The exception is in graphics, where stock graphics may be entered as part of front page/ cover categories or in the layout and design categories.

Entry process for non-member publications: Articles published in a periodical or on a website that is not a CCCA member can be entered directly by their author, if the author is an individual member of the CCCA or takes out such a membership as part of the entry application.

Each entry must be accompanied by a completed form. If you are entering on behalf of a publication, state your publication’s editorial purpose in 25 words or less, along with its intended audience. This will help the judges in assessing your entry. For author/artist/editor/designer, fill in only the applicable blank (e.g., writer for written material, editor for general excellence, designer for layout entries, etc.). This is where names are obtained for the certificates.

Publications or individuals may only win once (either 1st, 2nd, or 3rd) in each category. If the judges do not feel an award is merited, none will be given. If there are fewer than three entries in a category, only a first-place award will be given.



SPECIAL AWARDS

Student Award

(Co-sponsored by *Faith Today* and *Love Is Moving* magazines)

The award is open to Canadian post-secondary students of all ages. Entries must be news articles or journalistic essays/opinion writing published during the 2025 calendar year. Self-published materials (e.g., personal blog) are not eligible. Judges will look for excellence in journalistic reporting, research and writing, **from a Christian perspective**. If the student article was published in a CCCA member publication or website, the staff of that member publisher can pay the entry fee and enter the student article on behalf of its author.

A student who directly enters one article in the student category can do so for free and gains a free one-year membership to the CCCA. If the student wants to enter additional articles, they will incur a fee of \$15 per additional entry (with the first entry remaining free).

A.C. Forrest Memorial Award – Entry Guidelines

The A.C. Forrest Memorial Award is presented annually in honour of A.C. Forrest, editor of the *United Church Observer* for 23 years. It is presented for excellence in socially conscious religious journalism. The award is sponsored by the A.C. Forrest Award Committee of Observer Publications' Board of Directors.

Entries should be based on current news events or trends that raise religious ethical questions. The judge will consider quality of writing, depth of research, relevance and originality.

1. Entries will be judged based on the criteria set out above. This award is open to print and online entries from members and member publications. **Only single articles are eligible to enter (i.e., not editorial packages).**
2. A \$1,000 prize will be awarded for first place in circulation up to 9,999 and another \$1,000 first place prize for circulation over 10,000. There will be an honorable mention prize of \$100 in each subdivision. Entries will be judged by one judge appointed by the CCCA.
3. An entry form must be included with your entry. Please email **one copy** of your entry for the judge to consider. Submissions must have been published in 2025. A maximum of **two entries** per publication is allowed.
4. Stories which have been entered for CCCA awards are also eligible for the A.C. Forrest Memorial Award. It is an open competition.

REPORTING AND WRITING

1. EDITORIAL (Note: Two Categories)

- a. An **Editorial** is distinct from an opinion piece in that it is written by editorial/publishing staff, whether signed or attributed generically to the leadership team. The successful editorial will take a well-argued stand on a current issue relevant to the readership and complex in its implications. If an editorial generated opposition and further debate, whether in letters to the editor or subsequent op-ed submissions, or even reaction in other publications, please point these out to the judges.
- b. **From the Editor** is distinct from an editorial in that it introduces an issue to the reader and may include background information the writers may have left out of their articles, as well as spotlight specific articles of interest. A short anecdote, for instance, may highlight a specific article or two.

2. NEWS STORY

Winning submissions will be balanced, accurate, clearly structured and well written reports on events, issues and people of concern to the Christian community of readers. If it is news, it should be new – information new to readers concerning recent or ongoing events.

3. FEATURE (Note: Two Categories)

- a. A Feature is a single article of greater length, which examines people, issues, trends, debates or theories current in the public imagination. Compelling writing, a wide range of sources, comprehensiveness and originality will be considered.
- b. An entry in Feature Series must include two to four features related by a theme or subject. They should be relatable, descriptive, memorable and lively, with strong leads. Judges will look for relevance, quality of writing, detail and originality.

4. OPINION PIECE

Opinion writing will be judged on its ability to argue convincingly for a clear point of view without denigrating, belittling or ignoring the opposition. The writer must make the case, implicitly or explicitly, that the opinion being expressed matters. **Support argument with evidence.** Editorials are not eligible to enter into this category.

5. COLUMN

***Submit examples from three issues either in print, online or both by one author and/or several authors as a single entry.**

Successful columns build a relationship with readers. Strong opinions are valued, but only if they connect with a readership. If a columnist has generated mail, for or against, indicate how often and how heated.

6. SERVICE JOURNALISM

Stories in this category aid readers to engage with specific issues or in specific activities by providing practical tips, rankings or other information that equips readers to take action or to self-educate.

7. MEDIA REVIEW (Books, film, event, etc.)

Primarily book and movie reviews, though this category may include games, magazines, websites, podcasts or even festival reviews. Reviews should be of current works, and the best should anchor the review to a theological or religious reflection or point to a broader truth. Acceptable entry formats include single long reviews, editorial packages of multiple short reviews by multiple authors and review essays that discuss multiple creative products.



8. BIBLICAL/THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

This essay will use clear and thoughtful language to tie a biblical text, theology, ethics, or church history and teachings to the contemporary, lived experience of readers.

9. FIRST PERSON ACCOUNT

The subject's personal experience reveals lessons learned and insights shared. The writing should be intelligent, lively, diverse and engaging.

10. BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE

This category involves extraordinary reporting on one person's life and their Christian walk. Weight will be given to profiles of people who for reasons of notoriety or obscurity, prove to be difficult subjects. Multiple sources and voices are encouraged.

11. INTERVIEW

This category is reserved for conversation presented in question-and-answer-format. Probing but brief questions should elicit surprising or insightful answers from the interview subject. Readers should come away feeling they have come close to someone remarkable – not the interviewer. To enter an audio or video interview, use category 22 instead of this one.

12. HEADLINE AND DECK

Exceptional headlines and decks leave the reader wanting more. Entries will be evaluated on cleverness, sophistication, uniqueness, appropriateness and the ability to capture the reader's attention. Headlines and decks must relate to the story's main point or theme.

13. ORIGINAL SONG

Song lyrics convey meaningful Christian-based ideas with brevity, cohesiveness and emotional impact. The word choice should evidence artistry with fresh imagery that is both vivid and mysterious. The song should be memorable and repeatable and contain an inherent musicality. Recording may be included but the focus is on verbal communication, not musical composition.

14. ORIGINAL POETRY

Good poetry deals in ideas and insights, auditory aspects of language such as rhythm, alliteration and metre, figurative language, vivid imagery, irony and the like. Entries should consist of the first publication of original poetry 35 or fewer lines in length in any style except concrete (shape poems) or black out poems (marker covering another author's text to create a poem).

GRAPHICS

These are not awards for use of stock photography or AI generated images. Any photos that form an element in a graphic design must be first-time periodical publication. The graphic must inform the reader in ways that ordinary prose cannot. Stock graphics may be entered as part of front page/cover categories or in layout and design categories.

15. PHOTO

The winning photo will be based on compelling content, clear storytelling, technical quality, creativity, composition and emotional impact.

16. PHOTO ESSAY

- a. Magazine
- b. Newspaper

The winning essay will consist of at least four photos up to a maximum of 20 presented either online or on page. Photos will constitute the primary means of telling the story, with only enough text to place them in context. Photo reporting will be judged on journalistic merits of newsworthiness, enterprise and insight.

17. ORIGINAL ARTWORK

The word “original” is the key to this category. The ability to illustrate an idea or theme that directs the reader into the text will be key.

18. FRONT COVER/PAGE

- a. Magazine, circulation of up to 9,999
- b. Magazine, circulation above 10,000
- c. Newspaper

An effective and attractive design will combine text, typography, photography or illustration to draw the reader into the publication. It should be compelling without misrepresenting or distorting the content inside.

19. FEATURE LAYOUT & DESIGN

- a. Magazine
- b. Newspaper

Judges will look at overall design, taking into account the complexity of the material and the number of elements the page designer must bring together. An engaging and balanced appearance, effective and captivating headlines and cut lines, and design that serves the content will win this category.

20. ORIGINAL ALBUM, CD, BOOK OR BOOKLET COVER

The judge will look at the visual impact and its connection to contents. The cover must be compelling and reproduce well on a variety of platforms (i.e., the physical material in one’s hands and/or as a thumbnail on a website.)

PUBLIC RELATIONS

21. ADVERTISEMENT (any medium/platform)

An award-winning advertisement should connect emotionally with and speak directly to its target audience. It should have a memorable, eye-catching image with a short, simple, singular and clear message. An exceptional ad illustrates that less is more.

22. MARKETING CAMPAIGN

- a. Submit a successful **Public Relations, Marketing or Fundraising Campaign** done in 2025, which could be for a publication, an organization or a client. Include a description of the project’s mission and goals, strategy, tactics, team and, of course, the results. Provide examples (print materials, video clips, photographs, electronic presentation, etc.) of media and/or promotional materials, special events, advertisements, displays, social media use, and any other materials that demonstrate the creativity and effectiveness of your campaign.

- b. An award-winning **Social Media Campaign** is an excellent example of public communication that was designed for one or more social-media platforms and delivered during 2025. Should demonstrate creativity and high-quality design – and preferably evidence of impact. May consist of a single post or related series of up to five posts. Can include text, audio, video, photographs, illustrations, infographics and other design elements. In addition to the actual digital collateral URL(s), attachment(s), etc., the original submission should include a brief statement (maximum 250 words) that outlines the strategy behind the post/series, the context for its development and deployment; and/or the extent of its impact.

ONLINE AND INTEGRATED MEDIA

23. AUDIO OR VIDEO INTERVIEW

This category is reserved for a question-and-answer format. Probing but brief questions should elicit surprising or insightful answers from the interview subject. Readers should come away feeling they have come close to someone remarkable – not the interviewer.

24. SOCIAL MEDIA POST

An award-winning entry is a well-conceived post that was published on a social media platform. The text is well-written, with an accompanying photo, graphics or video that invite viewer engagement. The content is relevant to the purpose of the posting organization/individual. The post might include humour, tie in with current topics being discussed online, present a seasonal message or invite reader responses. Send a screenshot of the post and indicate briefly how readers are engaged with it.

25. BLOG SERIES

Judges will look for thoughtful content, originality, quality of writing, readability, frequency, engaging titles, use of images and graphics and responses to readers' comments. Provide the URLs of three different posts created for and first released over the internet in 2025.

26. VIDEO PRODUCTION

Provide a URL to a full-length video produced and released in 2025. Include a statement of purpose for the video as well as a description of its distribution. The video should be engaging and well-suited to its audience, with quality photography, sound and design. This submission could be from an individual or an organization.

27. PODCAST

Submissions should include a statement of purpose, as well as a description of its intended audience. The episode(s) will present topics relevant for that audience, with an engaging host(s), stimulating conversation, informative interviews or compelling storytelling. Quality sound and editing are important, as is frequency with which episode(s) are released. Entrants should submit links or downloadable files of up to three **episodes**, with information on how to access.

28. E-NEWSLETTER

An award-winning e-newsletter will invite readers to read and click on links, with short, well-written text, attractive design and easy navigation. Photos and/or art will add to the visual presentation. The newsletter will clearly identify the sender and offer additional ways for readers to connect with the sender, such as a website or social media. Submit **three samples** of past issues and indicate the frequency of publication.

GENERAL EXCELLENCE

29. GENERAL EXCELLENCE – WEBSITE

This category recognizes the ability of a website to get its content to readers quickly, efficiently and easily. The award goes to a website that looks appealing, is viewable and accessible on all devices, loads quickly, with none of the content hidden in awkward categories. Intuitive navigation and organization, including effective use of menus, search bar and site map, combined with a clean, attractive layout will factor in judging.

30. GENERAL EXCELLENCE – MAGAZINE*

Denominational or ecumenical general-interest magazine. Overall quality of the publication and appropriateness to its audience, including variety and quality of editorial content, design, photography, graphics and typography.

31. GENERAL EXCELLENCE – NEWSPAPER*

Denominational or ecumenical general-interest newspaper. Overall quality of the publication and appropriateness to its audience, including variety and quality of editorial content, design, photography, graphics and typography.

32. GENERAL EXCELLENCE – INSTITUTIONAL PUBLICATION*

Organizational/single-interest newsletter or magazine (e.g., alumni or advancement magazine, annual report). Overall quality of the publication and appropriateness to its audience, including variety and quality of editorial content, design, photography, graphics and typography.

***Please submit either online or if mailing please mail two copies each of three issues.**