The South African Writers’ Circle will be celebrating its 60th anniversary in a few months. The Circle was founded in September 1960 by journalist, Fay Goldie, and thirteen enthusiastic amateur and professional writers. Its objective was then, and still is, to promote the art of writing and the interests of its members. The initial group met at London House in Smith Street (now Anton Lembede Street), and they called themselves the Durban Writers’ Circle. The name of the Circle was changed in 1985 to the South African Writers’ Circle, to recognise its national membership, and they now meet at the Westville Library. Membership of the Circle is open to both published and aspirant writers.

The normal monthly programme (currently suspended due to Lockdown) includes a guest speaker, a bring-and-share lunch, which gives members and guests the opportunity to mingle and exchange ideas, and a short, practical workshop on the “nuts & bolts” of writing. Guest speakers during 2019 included Gcina Mhlope, author, anti-apartheid activist and storyteller, and local authors, Rajie Tudge and Cristy Zinn. The Circle occasionally hosts seminars and one-day writing workshops. There is a WhatsApp chat group and we can be found on various social media.

A unique feature is the monthly writing competition, and recently a Flash Cash competition was introduced that runs five times a year and is open to non-members. The monthly competitions for members cover poetry, short story writing, science fiction and play writing, and all entries are professionally adjudicated. As well as each entrant receiving a written adjudicator’s report, there are prizes to be won, and the winners are honoured at an annual award presentation. Some of the winning stories are also included in the monthly on-line newsletter, Write Now, which is emailed to members.

Until COVID-19 intervened, a mini-literary festival was being planned to celebrate the Circle’s 60th anniversary. Since it is unlikely that this will be possible this year, instead the Circle is running an Anniversary Writing Competition for members and non-members, as follows:

- An original fiction story of no more than 3000 words (of text, excluding title, pseudonym, etc),
illustrating changes in societal and/or literary norms between the 1960s and the present. Politics are specifically excluded. We ask that your story is not concurrently submitted elsewhere. Winners will be announced, and all entrants advised within four weeks of the closing date.

- Closing date for entries – 30 September 2020.

- Prizes – R2000 for the winner; R1000 for second place; R500 for third place.

- Entry fee – R50 for members and R100 for non-members. The fee for non-members will include SAWC membership for the balance of 2020.

- See the SAWC website www.sawriters.org.za for full details on how to enter our competitions. This is very important!