

Christian journey to be told in memoir



John Dempster's memoir will be published next week.

By Ian Duncan

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A COLUMNIST is set to publish a memoir later this month.

John Dempster, who writes the weekly Christian Viewpoint column in the Highland News, is set to publish *Choosing Joy: A Memoir Of Spiritual Trauma Survived* in both paperback and ebook formats.

The spiritual memoir, which covers seven decades, recounts what is described as a vivid mosaic of memories.

Mr Dempster, a former psychiatrist and GP, believes it will be of interest locally as

he has lived in the Highlands for the last 30 years.

He added: "But it's also of much wider interest because of the themes it deals with – including church-induced spiritual trauma, the interplay of mental health and religious faith, and the rethinking of faith for the 21st century."

The book has a particular focus on Mr Dempster's lifelong quest to find a way of being which is at once joyful, life-affirming and true to his own experience.

There are honest descriptions of spiritual trauma and the anxiety and depression which complicate the

author's quest for an "inner homecoming".

He describes, with forgiveness and at times wry humour, the effects of the Christian message he received in childhood.

He also charts his engagement with evangelicalism, Reformed Theology, the charismatic movement, post-modernism and, most recently, faith deconstruction and reconstruction.

And he recalls moments of joy, grace and a sense of what he calls inner wholeness when, he says, a great love beckons.

Mr Dempster said he was resolved to choose joy – to

live, regardless of his emotions in the moment, in the light of a fundamental love and joy which he believes lies at the heart of all things – but will this vision be strong enough to sustain him?

The book is aimed at people who have been wounded by their traumatic experiences of church; for those with mental health issues and their families; for those undergoing deconstruction of their previous Christian belief; for those struggling to free themselves

Kinraig-based Steve Aisthorpe, the author of *The Invisible Church* and *Rewilding the Church*, has

described *Choosing Joy* as "a work of integrity and courage, soul-stirring and faith enhancing".

Iain Macritchie, the former head of chaplaincy for NHS Scotland and now Priest in Charge at St Michael and All Angels in Inverness, has written the foreword in which he described the book as "a tremendously affirming offering to people of faith everywhere, encouraging us all to trust the process and engage with our own spiritual journeys, wherever they take us".

It is published on Tuesday.