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| Pew Reflections reflected image |
| 2 January – 27 March 2022 |
| Readings from *An Australian Lectionary 2022* (Year C) |
| *Written by* Robert McLean, ABM staff member |

It is with great pleasure that I present the third quarter’s set of ABM’s *Pew Reflections* for 2022.

It is ABM’s hope that you will find that these reflections prompt and help your congregations to ‘read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest’ the Scriptures, and that in doing so, their faith will be deepened.

We hope that you find them to be helpful as we continue being the Church through the unfolding pandemic in new and different ways.

**Wilnor Flores**

Church to Church Program Officer

*Robert McLean*

This quarter’s reflections have been written by Robert McLean, who has been with ABM since 2008.

Robert completed a postgraduate degree in theology from the University of Otago in New Zealand in 1996 and has been employed within the Anglican Church in various roles ever since.

How to use ABM’s *Pew Reflections*

ABM’s Pew Reflections are designed for you to be able to easily cut and paste them into your pew bulletins and apply your own formatting. As every parish bulletin has its own house style it is important that you use a typeface that fits into yours but as a general guide they can be formatted like the two examples below. We try to ensure that they take up about half of an A5 sheet, though some writers are more concise than others.

*Pew Reflections, First Quarter 2022*

Pew Reflections

Good Friday  
– Friday 3 April 2015

* Isaiah 52.13 – 53.12; Psalm 22  
  1 Corinthians 1.18-31 orHebrews 10.16-25  
  John 18.1 – 19. 42

Good Friday could be called ‘Where is God day?’ so often is that question posed by the various texts offered today. The answer, where it is given, is in suffering, disfigurement, on a cross, wherever we would not like to look.

* Pray for the lost and the dying. Pray too for ecumenical and interfaith relationships.
* Pray for ABM’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners, giving thanks for the work they do to further God’s mission in the world.

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Pew Reflections

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**2 January – 27 March**

Christmas 2C  
– Sunday 2 January 2022

* Jeremiah 31.7-14 *or* Sirach 24.1-12;  
  Psalm 147.12-20 *or* Wisdom 10.15-21; Ephesians 1.3-14; John 1.10-18 *or* John 1.1-18

The prologue to St John’s Gospel is one of the best-known and most-loved passages of Scripture. John writes elegantly as he describes for us the mystery of the Incarnation. We see a summary of all the gospels laid out for us: ‘… to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God …’ and in that we can see that God is inviting us to share an intimate part of the divine life. Those who receive Jesus and believe in his name become not just followers, but family.

* Lord, let me take the Christ Child into my heart this day, that I might be numbered among your children.
* Give thanks for the Church of the Province of Central Africa, remembering especially the work of the Zambia Anglican Council.
* Remember the Church throughout the world in your prayers this week and beyond by downloading the worldwide Anglican Cycle of Prayer: www.anglicancommunion.org/resources/prayer.aspx

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The Epiphany of our Lord C  
– Thursday 6 January 2022

* Isaiah 60.1-6; Psalm 72.1-7, 72.10-14;   
  Ephesians 3.1-12; Matthew 2.1-12

For anyone who wants a bit of glitz and glamour with their Christmas story, today’s the day. What must have Mary and Joseph made of their exotic visitors? What we do know about the visitors is that they were overjoyed when the star hovered over the place where the Holy Family was because they knew that they were close to the long-looked for Jesus. But with all the joy, something unsettling, perhaps even sinister – the Cross foretold in the gift of myrrh, the unguent used for embalming corpses. What would Mary and Joseph have made of that?

* Lord, no matter how far I might have to travel to look for you, or how long I might have to spend to find you, may my heart always be filled with joy because of you.
* Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church of Kenya.

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Ordinary Sunday 1C [Baptism of our Lord]  
– Sunday 9 January 2022

* Isaiah 43.1-7; Psalm 29;   
  Acts 8.14-17; Luke 3.15-22

In the reading from Luke’s gospel today, we see the comparison between the notorious Herod Antipas and Jesus himself. John’s criticism of the puppet king leads to prison and eventually death. Jesus, conversely, doesn’t meet with earthly condemnation or even earthly approval. Rather, the Holy Spirit appears and the heavenly voice says of him, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased’.

* Lord, may I live my life in such a way that you find yourself well pleased with me, your child.
* Give thanks for, and pray for all who are preparing for baptism this year.
* Give thanks for the work and witness of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan.

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Ordinary Sunday 2C [Epiphany 2]  
– Sunday 16 January 2022

* Isaiah 62.1-5; Psalm 36.5-10;   
  1 Corinthians 12.11-10; John 2.1-11

Today we read the story about the first time that Jesus displayed who he was – by the first of his signs – at the wedding at Cana of Galilee. Much of Jesus’ ministry was outside his hometown of Nazareth and outside Jerusalem. Here we see how it all begins. Through his actions people begin to believe in him.

* Lord, wherever you find the ordinary in my life, by your power transform it into something wonderful that gives you glory and helps others to believe in you.
* Give thanks for the work and witness of the Episcopal Church in the Philippines.

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Ordinary Sunday 3C [Epiphany 3]  
– Sunday 23 January 2022

* Nehemiah 8.1-3, 5-6, 8-10; Psalm 19;   
  1 Corinthians 12.12-31; Luke 4.14-21

In today’s gospel reading we learn of Jesus’ ministry in the Galilee and that he was praised by everyone. We go on to learn that he read from the prophet Isaiah at a synagogue where he announces God’s mission to his hearers – a mission of good news to the poor, release for captives, recovery of sight to the blind, liberty to the oppressed, and one where God’s favour is proclaimed.

* Lord, loose me from anything that binds me in mind, body or spirit, so that I might share in the glorious freedom you offer to all who listen to your voice.
* Give thanks for the *Daehan Seong Gong Hoe,* the Anglican Church of Korea.

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Australia Day   
– Wednesday 26 January 2022

* Jeremiah 29.4-14; Psalm 33.12-21;   
  1 Thessalonians 5.12-24; John 8.31-36

In today’s reading we see the motto of the Anglican Communion: ἡ ἀλήθεια ἐλευθερώσει ὑμᾶς – *The truth shall set you free*. The reading presents us with a challenge: are we really to believe that the Jewish people who were there with Jesus replied to him ‘We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone’? That’s hard to imagine given that the Jewish escape from enslavement in Egypt is celebrated at the Passover seder each year. Whatever the reason for the curious statement, it reminds us that people sometimes find their own or their country’s history problematic, or embarrassing , and sometimes they fudge or outright lie about what really went on.

* Lord, help me to see my own history, and the history of my country for what it is, without feeling the need for fib or fabrication. Help me to acknowledge the truth, no matter how unpleasant I might find it.
* Give thanks for the Anglican Church of Australia, and pray for its 23 dioceses, remembering especially our Primate, the Most Rev Geoffrey Smith, Archbishop of Adelaide.
* Give thanks for the work and witness of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Anglican Council and for the help they give to the Church and our country to acknowledge their histories.

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Ordinary Sunday 4C [Epiphany 4]  
– Sunday 30 January 2022

* Jeremiah 1.4-10; Psalm 71.1-6;  
  1 Corinthians 13.1-13; Luke 4.21-30

Today’s gospel reading continues the story of the beginning of Jesus ministry in Galilee. Last week the hearers of the passage from Isaiah that Jesus read were delighted. This week, however, not so much. In fact, they wanted to throw him off a cliff. Jesus had quoted stories from Scripture that offended them. He reminded them that in a time of famine God had chosen not someone Jewish, but the widow at Zarephath in Sidon (modern-day Lebanon) to be blessed by a visit from the prophet Elijah. She was blessed by never running out of oil and flour. And, to add insult to injury, he mentioned Naaman, the commander of the Syrian army, whom God had healed of his leprosy in the time of Elijah’s successor, Elisha. Gentiles being recipients of God’s grace was not an idea that pleased those around Jesus that day in the synagogue.

* Lord, may I always live in a way that finds favour with you, no matter how others around me live.
* Give thanks for the work and witness of the Church of North India, remembering especially today their ministry in a predominantly non-Christian context

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The Presentation of our Lord   
– Wednesday 2 February 2022

* Malachi 3.1-4; Psalm 24 *or* Psalm 84;  
  Hebrews 2.14-18; Luke 2.22-40

Today we read of the Holy Family going to the Temple so that Mary might undergo the Jewish rite of purification following childbirth. At the Temple they see the righteous old man, Simeon, who one seeing the longed-for salvation of Israel praises God in the words of what we now call the *Nunc Dimittis.* Also in the Temple, there is the prophet Anna, who on seeing Jesus praises God too, and talks to everyone about the redemption of Jerusalem.

* Lord, may I realise that no matter how old I am, age in itself is not a reason to stop praising you, nor talking about the good things you have done, to others.
* Give thanks for the work and witness of the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East.

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Ordinary Sunday 5C [Epiphany 5]  
– Sunday 6 February 2022

* Isaiah 6.1-8 *or* Isaiah 6.1-13; Psalm 138;  
  1 Corinthians 15.1-11; Luke 5.1-11

Today we read of Jesus calling some of the first disciples: Simon Peter, James and John. They were ordinary people, partners in a fishing enterprise. One can imagine that Peter must have groaned at the itinerant preacher with his instruction to cast out his net one more time. Peter had been up all night doing precisely that but with no result. However, when he pulls in his net this time his catch is so big that he needs not only the staff on his boat to help, but also James and John lend a hand. Jesus promises Peter that he will transform his skill at fishing into one that will benefit God’s mission: he will become a ‘fisher of people’.

* Lord, take whatever gifts you find in me and turn them towards the establishment of your kingdom.
* Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia *– today is Waitangi Day, NZ’s national day.*

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Ordinary Sunday 6C [Epiphany 6]  
– Sunday 13 February 2022

* Jeremiah 17.5-10; Psalm 1;   
  1 Corinthians 15.12-20; Luke 6.17-26

Jesus teaches us today about blessings and woes. Woe to us, rich as we are. Woe to us, bloated with self-satisfaction as we are. Woe to us who laugh without care. Woe to us, the well-regarded ones. It’s chastening stuff for the comfortable. What then can we do? We can walk alongside the poor, for theirs is the kingdom that is the only one worth seeking. We can feed the hungry, because God cares for their aching bellies more than ours. We can comfort the sorrowful; bringing them joy helps us to bring ourselves closer to Jesus. We can stand in solidarity with those whom society finds objectionable for one reason or another. May we ‘rejoice on that day’ at the end of time ‘and leap for joy’ along with the others that Jesus loves.

* Lord, help me to become a blessing to others.
* Give thanks for the work and witness of the *Nippon Sei Ko Kai*, the Anglican Church of Japan.

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Ordinary Sunday 7C [Epiphany 7]  
– Sunday 20 February 2022

* Genesis 45.3-11, 45.15; Psalm 37.1-11, 37.40-41;  
  1 Corinthians 15.35-50; Luke 6.27-38

In this week’s gospel reading Jesus gives us practical advice about how to live a good life: we are to love those that we would not normally be drawn towards – our enemies. We are to do good to those who hate us, bless those who curse us, and pray for those who abuse us. This doesn’t mean that those who do bad things to us should be immune from the consequences of their acts, but rather that we should not act in a way that damages ourselves even further. We are not to be judgemental, and we are to avoid condemning others. We are to try to fill our lives with goodness.

* Forgive me, Lord, for when- and wherever I have had abuse and hatred in my heart. Help me to amend my life so that I come closer to others and to you.
* Give thanks for the work and witness of the Church of the Province of Myanmar, especially at this time of tension

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St Matthias’ Day  
– Thursday 24 February 2022

* Acts 1.14-17, 1.20-26; Psalm 113 *or*  Psalm 84;   
  Philippians 3.13-21; John 15.9-17

Today the Church commemorates Matthias, the apostle who was elected to fill the gap left by Judas Isacariot’s betrayal of Jesus. In the gospel reading we read that if we do what Jesus tells us to do ,we are not his servants but his friends. We are to abide in in Christ’s love and we are to go and bear fruit.

* Lord, I pray that you will call me your friend. Show me where you want me to be and help me to bear fruit – fruit that will last.
* Give thanks for the work and witness of the Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa

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*EITHER …*

Ordinary Sunday 8C [Epiphany 8]  
– Sunday 27 February 2022

* Isaiah 55.10-13 *or* Sirach 27.4-7; Psalm 92.1-4, 12-15;  
  1 Corinthians 15.51-58; Luke 6.39-49

Today Jesus continues his practical teaching about how to live. We are not to be hypocritical, noticing the speck in our neighbour’s eye while ignoring the log in our own. We are to produce fruit from a good heart, and that way we will always speak goodness. And when we listen to the words of Christ, he wants those words to lead to *action*: if they don’t it’s like our constructing a house without a foundation. That leaves the whole house liable to be swept away when the floods come.

* Lord, help me to shun hypocritical behaviour and give me the grace to fill my heart and mouth with love.
* Give thanks for the work and witness of the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente*, the Philippine Independent Church.

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*… OR*

**The Last Sunday after the Epiphany**

– Sunday 27 February 2022

* Exodus 34.29-35; Psalm 99;   
  2 Corinthians 3.12 – 4.2; Luke 9.28-36 *or* Luke 9.28-43

Today we read about a strange event, the Transfiguration, known by the Greek Church as the *Metamorphosis*. The disciples whom Jesus has taken up Mount Tabor with him – Peter, John and James – witness Jesus surrounded not only by dazzling light but with Moses, the great Hebrew lawgiver, and Elijah, the great prophet. The event is reminiscent of the Baptism of Jesus (the Church commemorated that earlier this year on 9 January) because again a heavenly voice proclaims that Jesus is God’s Son, but this time adding that we should ‘listen to him’.

* Lord, beloved and chosen by God, help me to listen to your voice whether I hear it in times of spiritual ecstasy or in the day-to-day activities of life.
* Give thanks for the work and witness of the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente*, the Philippine Independent Church.

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Ash Wednesday  
– Wednesday 2 March 2022

* Joel 2.1-2, 2.12-17 *or* Isaiah 58.1-12; Psalm 51.1-17;  
  2 Corinthians 5.20b-6.10;   
  Matthew 6.1-6, 16-21; *or* Matthew 6.1-21

Jesus again warns us against hypocrisy, telling us that we will have already had our reward if we give alms, pray and fast merely for having been seen while doing any of those things. We are to build up for ourselves spiritual treasures that cannot be eaten away by moths or rust. One way to build up spiritual treasure is to be kind to others. Spending the season demonstrating kindness to others is far better, and indeed far more use, than giving up sugar in coffee or tea. As well as ‘taking on kindness’, spending time reading the Bible, or praying or reading spiritual books is an excellent thing to do.

* Lord, help me to grow in kindness and love this Lent, by helping others and by spending time with you through prayer, through reading the Scriptures or through reading spiritually edifying books.
* Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church of Melanesia.

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Lent 1C  
– Sunday 6 March 2022

* Deuteronomy 26.1-11; Psalm 91.1-2, 9-16;   
  Romans 10.4-13; Luke 4.1-15

Today we read of Christ’s Temptation in the Judean wilderness, where he was tempted away from playing his part in God’s mission by a Scripture-quoting Satan, before he returned, filled with the Spirit’s power, to minister in Galilee. This Lent, may we be on the look out for anything diabolical that keeps us as individuals or as the Church from following Jesus as our role model in playing *our* part in God’s mission.

* Lord, put a lock on my mouth, lest I use Scripture as a weapon against others. Guard my ears against any who would use the Bible as a way of following them, rather than you, the living Way to the Father. May your Spirit help us point others to you this Lent.
* Give thanks for the work and witness of the *Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui,* the Anglican Church of Hong Kong.

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Lent 2C  
– Sunday 13 March 2022

* Genesis 15.1-12, 15.17-18; Psalm 27;   
  Philippians 3.17 – 4.1; Luke 13.31-35 *or* Luke 9.28-36

¶ *For those using the reading about the Transfiguration today, please use the reflection for the Last Sunday after the Epiphany, above*

Today’s gospel reading sees some Pharisees come to warn Jesus that Herod Antipas is out to kill him and they warn him away from Jerusalem. Jesus is not at all deterred by their caution, and tells the Pharisees to tell ‘that fox’ Herod about how he is casting out demons and healing the sick for the next three days. Despite knowing that being in Jerusalem will result in his death, Jesus remains utterly committed to playing his part in God’s mission.

* Lord, like you may I play my part in working for God’s kingdom, never shying away from it even when difficulties and worries abound.
* Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church of Papua New Guinea

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Lent 3C  
– Sunday 20 March 2022

* Isaiah 55.1-9; Psalm 68.1-9;   
  1 Corinthians 10.1-13; Luke 13.1-9

Jesus talks about we are to bear fruit through the parable of the barren fig tree. The owner of the fig tree complains to his gardener that the tree is barren and has not borne fruit in three years. He wants to cut it down so that the soil is not wasted. However, his gardener asks for one more year in which the gardener will tend it with special care. Jesus, the gardener of our souls, wants us to live fruitful lives.

* Lord, on the day of Resurrection Mary Magdalene mistook you for a gardener; come, I pray you, into my soul and nourish it, that I may bear fruit for you.
* Give thanks for the work and witness of the Church of the Province of South East Asia.

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Lent 4C  
– Sunday 27 March 2022

* Joshua 5.2-12; Psalm 32;   
  2 Corinthians 5.16-21; Luke 15.11-32

Today we read St Luke’s well-known parable of the prodigal son, although the writer Barbara Brown Taylor has described it as the ‘parable of the dysfunctional family – a story about a weak patriarch with an absentee wife and two rebellious sons he seems unable to control, who is willing to sacrifice his honour to keep his community together’. A younger son does the unthinkable and asks his father for his inheritance well before his death. Once the son possessed his newly gained wherewithal, the money was soon frittered away in the fleshpots of the Gentile world. The son then had to earn some money in order to live. He gained a job as an assistant to some swineherds – the lowest of the low, and hardly a good job for any self-respecting Jew. On coming home, he addressed his father formally and with respect. His father rejoiced, clothed the son in fine clothing and ordered that a feast be held. Meanwhile, on returning from the field, the elder son heard the hubbub and asked a slave what was going on. The answer enraged him and he took his father to task, addressing him without respect or even acknowledging that the prodigal is his brother. The father’s answer to the elder son is likely to be regarded as problematic by anyone with a parent who plays favourites. Nonetheless, the story does make us wonder, as the Canadian theologian Chris Haslam notes, ‘at the end of the era, will godly people be ready to be joyous in sharing the Kingdom with reformed sinners and a God who loves them?’

* Lord, may I always come back to you in repentance if I wander away. May I always demonstrate love and fairness to others, not assuming that either are evident. May I put all bitterness aside so that joy can fill my life.
* Give thanks for the work and witness of the Church of South India, remembering especially today their ministry in a predominantly non-Christian context

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