



ANGLICAN BOARD OF MISSION

Working for Love, Hope & Justice

Pew Reflections REFLECTIONS BGM

1-29 January 2023

Readings from
An Australian Lectionary 2023
(Year A)

Written by
Robert McLean

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you.
(Colossians 3:16a)

In his *Nineteenth Homily on the Acts of the Apostles*, St John Chrysostom (d. 407) writes, 'It is not possible, I say *not possible*, ever to exhaust the mind of the Scriptures. It is a well which has no bottom'.

It is a pleasure to present the first set of ABM's *Pew Reflections* for 2023. You will notice that this set only extends for a month. That is because it is intercalary. After it, each edition will be three-monthly again, but the 'quarters' will become: February to April, May to July, August to October, and November to January.

This short set has been written by Robert McLean, who has worked for ABM for the past 14 years.

We hope that these reflections will stimulate you to ponder more deeply as you read or hear what God is saying to the Church, and to you, through the Sunday and feast day readings. We hope that they will be a springboard for you to delve more deeply into the Holy Scriptures.

In Christ,

Wilnor Flores
Church to Church Program Officer

Robert McLean



This quarter's reflections have been written by Robert McLean. Robert has worked for ABM since 2008.

A chorister and later a lay clerk of Christchurch Cathedral in New Zealand, Robert completed a postgraduate degree in theology from the University of Otago 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.

Example 1



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Pew Reflections

Good Friday

– Friday 3 April 2015

- Isaiah 52.13 – 53.12; Psalm 22
1 Corinthians 1.18-31 or Hebrews 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, where ever 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.

Text: The Very Rev. John Roundhill, Dean of Bendigo
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Example 2

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Pew Reflections – January 2023

Intercalary Edition

The Naming and Circumcision of Jesus

– Sunday 1 January 2023

- Numbers 6.22-27; Psalm 8;
Galatians 4.4-7; Luke 2.15-21

Around the Anglican Communion today, and beyond, many people will be singing the hymn, *How sweet the name of Jesus sounds*. It was written by John Newton, who also wrote *Amazing grace*. Newton knew the power of Jesus' name and how it could soothe sorrows, heal wounds, drive away fear, make whole the wounded spirit, calm the troubled heart, be heavenly food to the hungry and rest to the weary. This power is because the name Jesus means *the Lord is salvation*. The name of Jesus tells us who he is and what he has come to offer to us as a baby in a manger in a far-flung part of the Roman Empire. How can we honour the name that is above all others in our lives this year?

- Lord Jesus Christ, may I live in a way that honours your name today and every day throughout 2023.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia.

Text: Robert McLean
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The Epiphany of our Lord

– Friday 6 January 2023

- Isaiah 60.1-6; Psalm 72.1-7, 10-14;
Ephesians 3.1-12; Matthew 2.1-12

The exact identities of the Magi will never be known but it seems that they were Zoroastrian priests from Persia. In Greek *magos* means 'someone of a learned and priestly class' but in Farsi *magush* means something more like 'magician'. Whatever the case, the Magi were drawn to follow the star and find Jesus. We are told that when the star stopped they were 'overwhelmed with joy', and when they entered the house (NB, not the stable – this takes place about two years after Jesus' birth) they knelt and paid homage to Jesus. In the Roman catacombs there are over 80 depictions of the Magi. The early Roman Christians, Gentiles, identified with the Gentile Persian Magi. They, too, wanted to abandon their pagan customs and worship Jesus.

- Lord Jesus Christ, help me to discard anything that keeps me from worshipping you.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Church of the Province of South-East Asia.

Text: Robert McLean
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Ordinary Sunday 1
– Sunday 8 January 2023

[Baptism of our Lord]

- Isaiah 42.1-9; Psalm 29;
Acts 10.34-43; Matthew 3.13-17

As Jesus emerged from the water at his baptism, a voice from heaven was heard that said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.' How can we live so that God is pleased with us, too?

- Lord Jesus Christ, may my life please our heavenly Father. May I always be worthy of being called his child.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Anglican Council.

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Ordinary Sunday 2
– Sunday 15 January 2023

[Epiphany 2]

- Isaiah 49.1-7; Psalm 40.1-14;
1 Corinthians 1.1-9; John 1.29-42

In today's Gospel reading, John tells us about the calling of the first disciples. We are told that one of them was Andrew, and for this reason he is known by the Greek Church as *Πρωτόκλητος*, *Prōtoklētos* which means the First-Called. Jesus' invitation to him is a simple one – 'Come and see'. How can we invite others to 'come and see' what being a believer entails? How can we invite others to 'come and see' what God is doing in our lives? How can we invite others to 'come and see' what God is doing around the world?

- Lord Jesus Christ, may I never be afraid to invite other to come and see you.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church of Korea, the *Daehan Seong Gong Hoe*.

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Ordinary Sunday 3
– Sunday 22 January 2023

[Epiphany 3]

- Isaiah 9.1-4; Psalm 27.1-10;
1 Corinthians 1.10-18; Matthew 4.12-25

In today's Gospel reading, Matthew tells us about the beginning of Jesus' ministry and how he calls people to repent because the kingdom of God is near. He taught in synagogues, proclaimed the kingdom and healed various conditions. How can we – the Church – effectively teach, proclaim and heal in our time and place?

- Lord Jesus Christ, may I support the Church's educational, evangelistic and healing ministries as best as I am able.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church of Melanesia

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The Conversion of St Paul
– Wednesday 25 January 2023

- Acts 22.3-16 or Acts 9.1-22; Psalm 117;
Galatians 1.11-24; Luke 24.44-48

Both readings from the Book of Acts that are set in the lectionary as options for today are about Saul being blinded by God's divine light on his way to Damascus. This event absolutely transformed his life and he made a 180° turn, going from being a persecutor of the early Church to becoming one of its most prominent leaders. How has God intervened in our lives to change us for the better?

- Lord Jesus Christ, I open my life to you, so that your light may transform me that I may know you more and more.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church of Australia, and the National Council of Churches in Australia. May we all be one so the world may believe.

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Australia Day

– Thursday 26 January 2023

- Deuteronomy 8.5-14a; Psalm 125
Hebrews 11.8-16; Matthew 5.1-12

The reading from the Epistle to the Hebrews talks about those who feel themselves to be ‘strangers and foreigners on earth’. The writer of the letter tells us that ‘they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one’. Australia is a wonderful nation, but it is not perfect. No country is. How can we work to improve Australia, to make this great southern land into a ‘heaven on earth’? What kinds of things need to be achieved to make this place closer to God’s vision?

- Lord Jesus Christ, I give you thanks for all the blessings that I enjoy in this wonderful country. Help me to do those things you would have me do to improve it for all who live here.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Episcopal Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East.

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Ordinary Sunday 4

[Epiphany 4]

– Sunday 29 January 2023

- Micah 6.1-8; Psalm 15;
1 Corinthians 1.18-31; Matthew 5.1-12

In his ‘sermon on the mount’ Jesus tells us about the kinds of people who will be blessed by God: the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, the persecuted, the reviled. We can see that none of these are what would normally be thought of as successful people. God’s values do not align with worldly attainment. Those who will be blessed by God have already been dismissed by the world as being irrelevant failures, yet God’s heart treasures them. How can we renounce things like status, power, and worldly wealth for those things that God finds value in?

- Lord Jesus Christ, may I always value what you value, eschewing those things of no ultimate significance.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Church of the Province of Myanmar.

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