



# ANGLICAN BOARD OF MISSION

*Working for Love, Hope & Justice*

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## Pew Reflections REFLECTIONS ABM

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3 August – 29 October 2023

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Readings from  
*An Australian Lectionary 2023*  
(Year A)

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*Written by*  
Robert McLean  
  
*ABM Staff Member*

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*The chief means for attaining wisdom, and suitable gifts for the ministry, are the Holy Scriptures, and prayer. – John Newton*

It is a pleasure to present the August to October set of ABM's *Pew Reflections* for 2023.

This set has been written by Robert McLean, one of ABM's staff members.

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.

*The amount of time we spend with Jesus – meditating on His Word and His majesty, seeking His face – establishes our fruitfulness in the kingdom. – Charles Stanley*

In Christ,

Wilnor Flores

## *Robert McLean*


Born in New Zealand, Robert McLean was a chorister at the now ruined-by-earthquakes Christchurch Cathedral as a child. As an undergraduate, he studied history at the University of Canterbury and then took a post-graduate degree in theology at the University of Otago.

Since coming to Australia almost twenty years ago, apart from a stint on the administrative staff of the National Council of Churches in Australia, he has worked in a variety of roles with the Anglican Church: as an assistant in nursing and as a recreational activities officer for Anglican Retirement Villages; as verger and as parish secretary at St James', King Street; and for the past fourteen years at ABM. Nowadays he lives in Fairfield, NSW, close to the many Assyrian, Chaldean and Coptic Christians who have made new homes in this wonderful country. Neo-Aramaic, the 21st-century version of the Aramaic of Jesus, is spoken in the suburb's streets and shops.

# 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, 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.

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

**Pew Reflections**


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# Pew Reflections – August to October 2023

## Stephen, Deacon and First Martyr

– Thursday 3 August 2023 *if not observed on 26 December*

- 2 Chronicles 24.17-22; Psalm 31.1-8;  
Acts 6.8-10; 7.54-60; Matthew 10.17-22

The Psalmist writes of God's being able to shelter and save, to be a rock and a refuge. He finds himself at liberty and not having been given over to the power of the enemy. Why is this? It is because he has committed his spirit into God's hands: his trust is in the Lord. May we do the same.

- I pray to you, Lord, that I might deepen my commitment to you throughout this week. I put my spirit into your hands.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Church of South India

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## EITHER

### The Transfiguration of our Lord

– Sunday 6 August 2023

- Daniel 7.9-10, 13-14; Psalm 97;  
2 Peter 1.16-19 [20-21]; Mark 9.2-10

The Psalmist writes that those who serve idols and glory in mere nothings will be ashamed. Could we justify ourselves before God for all our idol worship – our love of money, status, alcohol, drugs, sex, gambling ... the list goes on, right up to the love of nuclear weapons. May we focus on things that are good and not worship those things that are or can be harmful.

- Help me, Lord, to worship only you.
- Give thanks for those who engage in the hard work of peacebuilding
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church of Japan, the *Nippon Sei Ko Kai*.

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## OR

### Ordinary Sunday 18 A

[Pentecost 10]

– Sunday 6 August 2023

- Genesis 32.22-31; Psalm 17.1-7, 16;  
Romans 9.1-8, [9-16]; Matthew 14.13-21

Faith that the Lord will answer prayer is at the heart of today's psalm. The Psalmist wants God to hear his cry, and to be shown the wonders of God's steadfast love. He wants to see God as God is – that will be his satisfaction.

- Lord, hear me and help me. May I always discern and seek reality, and not fall into self-deceptive fantasy, for you are I AM, the 'Great Reality'.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church of Japan, the *Nippon Sei Ko Kai*.

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### Ordinary Sunday 19 A

[Pentecost 11]

– Sunday 13 August 2023

- Genesis 37.1-4, 12-28; Psalm 105.1-6, 16-22;  
Romans 10.4-15; Matthew 14.22-36

Today the Psalmist encourages us to remember the wonders that God has done, and in the second part of the portion, he rehearses the story of Joseph as an example of God's marvel-making power. Where can we see the wonders of God in our lives?

- Lord, help me not to be oblivious to the wonders you do in my life. Help me not only to see them, but to be grateful as well.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Episcopal Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East

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**Mary, Mother of our Lord**  
– Tuesday 15 August 2023

- Isaiah 61.10 – 62.3;  
*Either Psalm 113 or The Song of Mary*  
Galatians 4.4-7; Luke 2.1-7

Both the Psalm and its alternative, the Magnificat, talk about God upending the human order of things and raising the lowly from the dust, the poor from the dungheap. God's ways are not like ours, but as we Christians have been called to be more godlike, we must not let injustice and oppression go unchallenged.

- O God, I pray that you will open my eyes to a social issue where I can help to bring about your justice. Move my heart and mind so that I join in with what others are already doing.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Mothers' Union throughout the world.

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**Ordinary Sunday 20 A** [Pentecost 12]  
– Sunday 20 August 2023

- Genesis 45.1-15; Psalm 133;  
Romans 11.13-32 [33-36]; Matthew 15.[10-20] 21-28

Today the Psalmist exhorts us to unity. Sometimes parishes are, sadly, riven with division and disunity. Sometimes there's an in-crowd and a not-so in-crowd. Sometimes it's the congregation against the beleaguered parish priest. It's shameful stuff. How can we be unifiers and unifiers, helping to replace division with unity?

- I pray, Lord, that you can use me to be a unifier and unifier in my parish, or home, or workplace – wherever there is division.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Church of Province of Myanmar

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**Bartholomew, Apostle and Martyr**  
– Thursday 24 August 2023

- Deuteronomy 18.15-18; Psalm 145.10-18;  
Revelation 21.9b-14; John 1.45-51

'The Lord upholds all those who stumble: and raises up all those that are bowed down'. How lucky are we that we have a God who supports us even when we have done wrong (helping us to face the truth and consequences of our actions) and who supports those who are burdened by despair, feelings of uselessness, guilt or any other encumbrance.

- Lord, help me to come to you with all my guilt, worries and negative feelings so that I may find and know your support in order to make my life pleasing to you.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of Gawura School within St Andrew's Cathedral School in Sydney

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**Ordinary Sunday 21 A** [Pentecost 13]  
– Sunday 27 August 2023

- Exodus 1.8 – 2.10; Psalm 124;  
Romans 12.1-8; Matthew 16.13-20

Sometimes life can feel overwhelming – as if we are in a small boat being buffeted this way and that by forceful waves and strong winds and that there is nobody to help us. The Psalmist tells us where help is to be found: the name of the Lord who has made heaven and earth. That same help allowed the Psalmist to write: 'We have escaped like a bird from the snare of the fowler; the snare is broken, and we have gone free'. Being able to be at complete liberty and escape from certain doom is available to all who need it today.

- Thank you, Lord, for your offer of freedom to all who need it in their lives today
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church of Papua New Guinea.

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**The Martyrs of New Guinea**  
– Saturday 2 September 2023

- Zephaniah 3.14-20; Psalm 130;  
Romans 8. 33-39; John 12.20-32

Today's Psalm is one of the ones known as Penitential Psalms (the others are 6, 32, 38, 52 and 102). When we remember the sufferings of the martyrs it is something quite foreign to most of us, especially to those who have lived their whole lives in Australia. Nonetheless, we can find inspiration in their lives for ours: their preparedness to help other, their determination to see a job through to its end, their belief in God.

- Lord, help me to embody the spirit of the martyrs in my life in whatever way I can.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of Anglican Religious Orders throughout the world.

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**Ordinary Sunday 22 A**  
– Sunday 3 September 2023

[Pentecost 14]

- Exodus 3.1-15; Psalm 105.1-6, 23-26;  
Romans 12.9-21; Matthew 16.21-28

Today the Psalmist tells us to 'Give thanks to the Lord and call upon his name'. Many, perhaps most of us, are good at asking God for things, especially when we undergo difficulties and stressful situations. But we're not so good at gratitude. Some people like to focus on thankfulness by keeping a gratitude journal, in which they write down the things that they felt grateful for that day. It's a good way of taking notice of the small blessings all around us because each entry doesn't need to be for something extraordinary, like an overseas holiday. Most of them are likely to be for the small but special thing in life – a beautiful sunset, a good catch-up with a friend, a hobby enjoyed.

- Lord, help me to be thankful for all the blessings you extend to me.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Episcopal Church in the Philippines.

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**Ordinary Sunday 23 A**  
– Sunday 10 September 2023

[Pentecost 15]

- Exodus 12.1-14; Psalm 149;  
Romans 13.1-10; Matthew 18.10-20

It's very easy to get stuck doing the same kind of things over and over, and thereby get ourselves into a rut. Perhaps that is why the Psalmist says to us today: 'O praise the Lord, and sing to the Lord a new song'. Sometimes our religious life needs something new to allow it to develop and mature – we're called, after all, to have a child-like faith, not a childish one. This week, try something new to spruce-up and re-energise your religious life, remembering always to praise our Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

- Lord, encourage me to somehow 'sing a new song' to you this week, lest my spiritual life become stale.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church of Kenya.

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**Holy Cross Day**  
– Thursday 14 September 2023

- Numbers 21.4b-9;  
*Either* Psalm 78.1-2, 34-48 *or* Psalm 98.1-6;  
*Either* 1 Corinthians 1.18-24 *or* Philippians 2.5-11;  
John 3.13-17

We have a God who is merciful, one who knows our own human frailty. As the Psalmist says (Psalm 78): 'He, being merciful, forgave their iniquity and did not destroy them: many times he turned his anger aside, and would not wholly arouse his fury. He remembered that they were but flesh: like a wind that passes, and does not return'. We all know that there have been times in our lives when our behaviour has been less than ideal, perhaps even iniquitous. May we repent, confess it to God and make reparation to those whom we have wronged.

- Lord, thank you for your mercy. Help me to have the courage to look at my poor behaviour realistically, confess it to you, and then make amends.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia.

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**Ordinary Sunday 24 A**  
– Sunday 17 September 2023

[Pentecost 16]

- Exodus 14.19-31;  
*Either* Psalm 114 *or* Exodus 15.1-13, 17-18;  
Romans 14.1-14; Matthew 18.21-35

Both today's psalm and the alternative canticle remind us of the Easter Vigil where the Church celebrates the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. This miracle is the focus of the Jewish Passover. The Psalmist tells us that God is powerful enough to have turned the 'rock into a pool of water and the flint-stone into a welling spring'. If we look, we can find those times where God has caused miracles to happen in our own lives. There are probably times, if we look carefully enough, when God has done something miraculous for our country. Let us all be attentive this week to see where we can find God's miracles in our own lives, among our friends and families and within Australia.

- Lord, help me to find miracles, both big and small, in the world.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church of Korea, the *Daehan Seong Gong Hoc*.

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**Matthew, Apostle, Evangelist and Martyr**  
– Thursday 21 September 2023

- Proverbs 3.1-6; Psalm 19.1-6;  
Ephesians 4.1-14; Matthew 9.9-13

The beginning of Psalm 19 sees the Psalmist telling us that the heavens (a part of the created world) silently declare God's glory and the deeds that he has done. The rest of the psalm is about the commands that God has given us. Our task as Christians is to join in with the natural world's praise of God and to obey his commands.

- Lord, guide me to see your glory in the natural world and to obey your commandments given to the human race.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of *La Iglesia Filipina Independiente*, the Philippine Independent Church

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**Ordinary Sunday 25 A**  
– Sunday 24 September 2023

[Pentecost 17]

- Exodus 16.2-15; Psalm 105.1-6, 37-45; Philippians 1.[1-20] 21-30; Matthew 20.1-16

Today the Psalmist teaches us to ‘Seek the Lord and his strength: seek his face continually’. Sometimes it can feel that God is remote and afar off – the transcendent God. But we must never forget that God is immanent – that is, internal to us – because God is the source of all our being and our bodies are temples of God’s Spirit. God makes his home in our hearts as much as in the heavens. So we do not have to look far to find God – but we do have to decide to look.

- Lord, help me to prepare a heart for you, a heart that is worthy.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church of Melanesia.

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**Michaelmas**  
– Friday 29 September 2023

- *Either* Daniel 7.9-10, 13-14; *or* Ezekiel 1.4-12; Psalm 138; Revelation 12.7-12a; John 1.45-51

The Psalmist speaks of God, saying: ‘At a time when I called to you, you gave me answer: and put new strength within my soul’. This is because, we are told later, ‘For though the Lord is exalted, he looks upon the lowly’. We have a God who not only listens, but who answers. We have a God who can renew our strength in testing times. Today we celebrate the feast of St Michael and all Angels, the messengers of God. We give thanks for all the ways that we receive God’s messages to us – Scripture, divine inspiration, messages from others, and so on.

- Lord, help me to discern your messages to me, messages of love and comfort, messages of direction and correction. Thank you for looking upon the lowly ones, such as me.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Church of the Province of Central Africa.

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**Ordinary Sunday 26 A**  
– Sunday 1 October 2023

[Pentecost 18]

- Exodus 17.1-7; Psalm 78.1-4, 11-16; Philippians 2.[1-13]14-30; Matthew 21.23-32

The Psalmist talks to us today of evangelisation within families: ‘What we have heard and known, what our forebears have told us, we will not hide from their children, but declare to a generation yet to come the praiseworthy acts of the Lord, his mighty and wonderful works’. Sometimes people think of evangelisation as the concern of a crazy few, and as something done primarily overseas. Nothing could be more wrong. Evangelisation concerns every member of the Church. It begins at home, with parents and grandparents (and, of course, godparents) talking to their children about Jesus Christ, his life, his death, his resurrection. The home is the primary place where the next generation of the Church is nurtured.

- Jesus, Son of God, help me to take the opportunity to talk to my children (and godchildren) about you, so that knowledge of your love goes flows on to the next generation.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of NATSIAC, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Anglican Council

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**Ordinary Sunday 27 A**  
– Sunday 8 October 2023

[Pentecost 19]

- Exodus 20.1-4, 7-9, 12-20; Psalm 19; *Either* Philippians 3 *or* Philippians 3.4b-14; Matthew 21.33-46

The final verse of Psalm 19 is a familiar prayer often used by preachers as they begin their sermons, ‘May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer’. I imagine we have all heard it, perhaps in the ‘... and the meditations of all our hearts’ version. It’s a prayer that shouldn’t be restricted to preachers because it is a beautiful, simple and easy-to-remember prayer that we can all pray each day, perhaps when we first awaken. Give it a try – it’ll set you up for a God-focussed day.

- May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of CAPA, the Council of the Anglican Provinces of Africa.

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Ordinary Sunday 28 A  
– Sunday 15 October 2023

[Pentecost 20]

- Exodus 32.1-14; Psalm 106.1-6, 20-24;  
Philippians 4. 1-9 [10-23]; Matthew 21.1-14

Today the Psalmist tells us that those who act according to justice, who at all times do the right are blessed by God. Each day we are given many opportunities to make decisions. Some of them will be of no great consequence, such as the answer to ‘Should I go to the shops today or tomorrow?’ But some decisions do have serious consequences with answers that are clearly right or wrong – to take an extreme example, ‘Should I murder my spouse?’ Sometimes decisions can seem morally grey. But the Psalmist’s injunction to always act justly and to do the right thing is helpful. Which answer brings the most justice in a particular situation? That is the answer we should always prefer.

- Lord, help me to act justly in every situation.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the *Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui*, the Anglican Church of Hong Kong.

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Luke, Evangelist and Martyr  
– Wednesday 18 October 2023

- Jeremiah 8.22 – 9.3; Psalm 145.10-18;  
2 Timothy 4.9-17a; Luke 10.1-9

According to the Psalmist, ‘The Lord is just in all his ways and faithful in all his dealings. The Lord is near to all who call upon him, to all who call upon him in truth’. We have a God on whose promises we can depend. We have a god who wants us to be grounded in reality and so, when we come to God in prayer, we need to be truthful and not mask things like our bad behaviour, or ask for frivolous things that we know in our heart of hearts God may not want to grant us.

- Pray that we may trust in God’s faithfulness and timing.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Church of Ceylon

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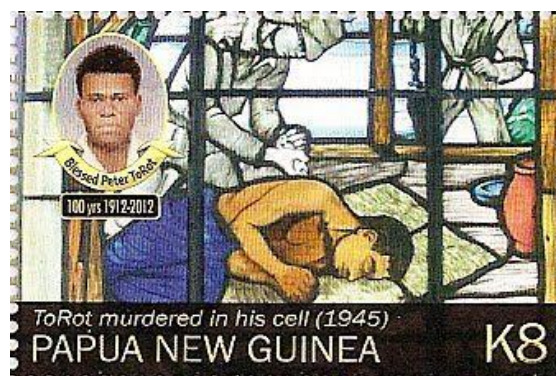
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**Ordinary Sunday 29 A**  
– Sunday 22 October 2023

[Pentecost 21]

- Exodus 33.12-23; Psalm 99;  
1 Thessalonians 1.1-10; Matthew 22.15-33

In Psalm 99 the Psalmist talks about the holiness of God. As Christians, our duty is to become more and more like God. How then can we aim to become more holy? Galatians 5:14 tells us that ‘the whole law is fulfilled in one word: You shall love your neighbour as yourself’. So, to become holy we need to become like God and think primarily of others. God cares for humanity in a wishing-for-their-good way, and we are called to go and do likewise – just like we are told to do when we read about the Good Samaritan.

- Lord, help me to work for the good of others, so that I may become more and more like you, holier day by day.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Melanesian Brotherhood, the Melanesian Sisterhood, the Society of St Francis and the Sisters of the Church who minister throughout the Pacific Islands.

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**Simon and Jude, Apostles and Martyrs**  
– Saturday 28 October 2023

- Deuteronomy 32.1-4; Psalm 19.1-6;  
Jude 1-3, 17-25; Luke 6.12-16

The beginning of Psalm 19 sees the Psalmist telling us that the heavens (a part of the created world) silently declare God’s glory and the deeds that he has done. The rest of the psalm is about the commands that God has given us. Our task as Christians is to join in with the natural world’s praise of God and to obey his commands.

- Lord, guide me to see your glory in the natural world and to obey your commandments given to the human race.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Church of Bangladesh

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**Ordinary Sunday 30 A**  
– Sunday 22 October 2023

[Pentecost 22]

- Deuteronomy 34.1-12; Psalm 90.1-7, 13-17;  
1 Thessalonians 2.1-13; Matthew 22.34-46

Psalm 90, one of the most poetic in the whole psalter, helps us to see our place as time-bound creations compared to God our creator, of whom the Psalmist writes, ‘a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday passing, or like one watch of the night’. The Psalmist knows that God is far beyond us in every way, and so his response is: ‘O satisfy us early with your mercy, that all our days we may rejoice and sing’. He knows we need God’s mercy because without it there would be no prospect of rejoicing. May God always extend mercy to us, for without it we would perish.

- Thank you for your mercy, Lord. Let me rejoice and sing of your grace to me.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of Wontulp-Bi-Buya College in Cairns and Nungalinya College in Darwin.

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