



ANGLICAN BOARD OF MISSION

Working for Love, Hope & Justice

Pew Reflections REFLECTIONS ABM

1 May – 28 July 2024

Readings from
An Australian Lectionary 2024
(Year B)

Written by
Robert McLean
ABM Staff

The Scripture is God's way of initiating a conversation; prayer is our response. – Mark Batterson

It is a pleasure to present the May to July set of ABM's *Pew Reflections* for 2024.

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.

This is why we feast on the Word of God, to understand the love of God, shown in the flesh-and-blood person of God, that we might find our way back to God. – Wendy Speake

In Christ,

Wilnor Flores
Church-to-Church Program Officer

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 over twenty-five 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. Till recently he lived 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 by the Assyrians.



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

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Pew Reflections – May to July 2024

St Philip and St James

– Wednesday 1 May or Friday 3 May 2024

- Isaiah 30.18-21; Psalm 19.1-6;
1 Corinthians 15.1-8; John 14.6-14

Most of the time the disciples were a bit slow on the uptake. Today Philip demands of Jesus to be shown the Father in order to be satisfied. Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father'. May we stick close to Jesus to see his, and our, Father in heaven.

- Pray that we all might know Jesus more and more thoroughly so that we might see the Almighty and everlasting Father of us all.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church of Kenya.

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Easter 6 B

– Sunday 5 May 2024

- Acts 10.44-48; Psalm 98;
1 John 5.1-12; John 15.9-17 or John 16.16-24

The believers accompanying Peter were astonished that the Holy Spirit was being poured out even on to the Gentiles who heard the word. This must have been truly shocking to them. When and how have we seen God throwing open the doors to the Church even wider in our own experience? How have we responded? In awe and wonder, or angry that God has done something new that we do not understand?

- Pray for all whom the Church excludes, and pray that God will open the doors of our hearts and minds to be as welcoming as Christ would have us.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Episcopal Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East, remembering especially Al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza City.

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St John the Evangelist

– Monday 6 May 2024

[unless observed on 27 December]

- Proverbs 8.22-31; Psalm 97;
1 John 1.1-5; John 20.2-8

Today we read of Peter and the 'other disciple' reaching the empty tomb on Easter Day and, seeing the evidence for themselves, believing in what Mary Magdalene had told them. God saw to it that she became the first to proclaim the Risen Lord. May we follow in her footsteps.

- Pray that, like Peter and the 'other disciple', we may all listen to women's experiences in the Church.
- Give thanks for the Church of Bangladesh, remembering especially today their ministry in a predominantly non-Christian context.

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Ascension Day

– Thursday 9 May 2024

- Acts 1.1-11; Psalm 93;
Ephesians 1.15-23; Mark 16.15-20

Today Jesus departs from the disciples and ascends to heaven. Before he does so he tells them that they are his witnesses, the people who have seen and heard his deeds on earth and who can pass knowledge of them on to others. As the Church, we are likewise witnesses. How often do we find ourselves telling others about the great things that Jesus has done?

- Give thanks for the work and witness of the nation's Aboriginal clergy, virtually all of whom work for the Church without a stipend.
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Easter 7 B

– Sunday 12 May 2024

- Acts 1.15-17, 21-26; Psalm 1;
1 John 5.9-13; John 17.6-19

Today we read of Matthias' election to stand among the apostles in the place of Judas Iscariot. It must have been daunting to stand among them, knowing that one of them had not only recently betrayed Jesus but had also ended his own life. And yet, Matthias allowed his name to go forward for election and was chosen. God gave him the grace to become a faithful apostle.

- May we always be ready to take the reins when the situation demands it, especially in our church life.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Episcopal Church in the Philippines.

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St Matthias

– Tuesday 14 May 2024

[unless observed on 24 February]

- Acts 1.14-17, 20-26; Psalm 84 or Psalm 113;
Philippians 3.13-21; John 15.9-17

Like the other disciples, St Matthias was appointed to bear fruit, fruit that would last. Tradition holds that St Matthias preached around Cappadocia and along the Caspian Sea, living near the port of Issus. It is also said that he preached in modern-day Georgia. It is believed that Matthias was martyred by either stoning or beheading. His legacy is the faith of the Georgian people and the Georgian Orthodox Church.

- Give thanks for all those missionaries who took the gospel into non-Christian lands and who paid the ultimate price.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the nation's Torres Strait Islander clergy, virtually all of whom work for the Church without a stipend.

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Pentecost

– Sunday 19 May 2024

- Acts 2.1-21 or Ezekiel 37.1-14; Psalm 104.26-36;
Romans 8.22-27 or Acts 2.1-21; John 15.26-27; 16.4b-15

Ezekiel's well-known prophecy shows us that without breath, there is no life. We need that breath literally as well as metaphorically: we need the Spirit to vivify us, we need inspiration to really exist, endure and flourish. Otherwise, we are merely skeletons with no life in us. Pray that the Holy Spirit may enliven and inspire us so that we may truly live.

- Holy Ghost, dispel our sadness,
Pierce the gloom of sinful night;
Come, thou Source of sweetest gladness,
Breathe thy life and spread thy light!
- Give thanks for the two dioceses of the Church of Ceylon, which covers most of Sri Lanka, remembering their ministry in a multi-religious context.

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Trinity Sunday

– Sunday 26 May 2024

- Isaiah 6.1-8; Psalm 29;
Romans 8.12-17; John 3.1-17

St Paul tells us that 'all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God'. That means that those who follow God's Spirit are not just creations of the Creator but rather related to him in a profound and intimate way. Like Jesus, may we be able to discern the Spirit and follow so that we too may be numbered among God's children today and all days.

- To thee our morning song of praise,
To thee our evening prayer we raise;
Thee may our souls for evermore
In lowly reverence adore.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church of Melanesia.

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Thanksgiving for the Holy Communion – Corpus Christi
– Thursday 30 May 2024

- Exodus 24.3-8; Psalm 116;
1 Corinthians 10.14-21; Mark 14.12-16 [17-21] 22-26

Today the Church celebrates the institution of the Eucharist, where during an ordinary meal Jesus took bread and wine, telling his disciples that those things were his body and his blood, What must the disciples have thought at this left-field statement? What would they have thought at his saying that his blood is poured out for many? I imagine they had many questions, just as we might today. Nonetheless, what we do know is that Jesus' Body and Blood has sustained the faithful day in, day out, for two millennia.

- Pray for all churches, institutions and societies under the patronage of the Blessed Sacrament.
- Give thanks for ABM's networking partner, USPG (United Society Partners in the Gospel), based in the UK.

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The Visitation of the BVM to Elizabeth
– Friday 31 May 2024

- 1 Samuel 2.1-10; Psalm 113;
Romans 12.9-16b; Luke 1.39-57

In what would otherwise be an unremarkable visit between two cousins, we discover that Elizabeth makes three benedictions towards Mary: 'Blessed are you among women, blessed is the fruit of your womb, blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord. Mary's response is to say that surely, from now on all generations will call her blessed because of what our merciful and just God has done for her.

- Lord, empower us to see your grandeur revealed in the world around us and, seeing this, strengthen our resolve to husband and nurture our earthly home.
- Give thanks for the work of Wontulp-Bi-Buya College (Cairns) and Nungalinya College (Darwin) who provide ecumenical theological and community education to First Nations people

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Ordinary Sunday 9 B
– Sunday 2 June 2024

- 1 Samuel 3.1-10 [11-20]; Psalm 139.1-6, 13-18;
2 Corinthians 4.5-12; Mark 2.23—3.6

The Pharisees were not impressed by Jesus and his disciples plucking and eating grain on the Sabbath. Nor were they impressed by his curing a man with a withered hand on the same day. In response to their first objection, Jesus reminds them of the story of hungry David and his companions eating the shewbread, reserved solely in the Temple for its priests. The second story sees Jesus trying to get the Pharisees to admit that doing good on the Sabbath is not a bad thing – but rather than agreeing with him, the obvious and right thing to do, they plot to get rid of him instead.

- Help us to see, Lord, that rules that do not bring relief and goodness when they are needed are rules that may need at least to be bent, if not broken.
- Give thanks for the Church of South India, remembering especially today their ministry in a predominantly non-Christian context.

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Ordinary Sunday 10 B
– Sunday 9 June 2024

- 1 Samuel 8.4-11 [12-15] 16-20; 11.14-15; Psalm 138;
2 Corinthians 4.13—5.1 [2-5]; Mark 3.20-35

Whoever does the will of God is Christ's brother and sister and mother. By discerning God's will and doing whatever it is God wants us to do, we draw not just close to Jesus, but have a living relationship with him, as close as a sibling-sibling or parent-child one. What a wonderful gift we are offered.

- God, help me do so your will, drawing closer and closer to your Son, Jesus.
- Give thanks for the work of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Anglican Council.

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St Barnabas
– Tuesday 11 June 2024

- Job 29.11-16; Psalm 98;
Acts 11.22-30; 13.1-3; Matthew 10.7-13

We read in Acts that Barnabas exhorted others to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast devotion; and that he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. His name means *Son of Encouragement*.

- Let us be known for all the encouragement, reassurance and support we give to others to remain faithful to the living God. May we be just like Barnabas.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church of Korea, the *Daehan Seong Gong Hoe*.

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Ordinary Sunday 11 B
– Sunday 16 June 2024

- 1 Samuel 15.13—16.13; Psalm 20;
2 Corinthians 5.6-10 [11-13] 14-17; Mark 4.26-34

St Mark tells begins to tell us about the parables Jesus used to talk about the kingdom of God. We see that the kingdom is mysterious in that growth happens because of complex and unseen forces. Growth is organic rather than programmatic. The kingdom begins in a very small-scale way, but flourishes with the right kind of care.

- What small-scale can I do this week to begin something that may eventually flourish for the sake of the kingdom of God?
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Church of the Province of South-East Asia.

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Ordinary Sunday 12 B
– Sunday 23 June 2024

- 1 Samuel 17.[1a, 4-11,19-23] 32-49;
or 1 Samuel 17.57—18.5, 10-16;
Psalm 9.9-20 or Psalm 133
2 Corinthians 6.1-13; Mark 4.35-41

In the middle of chaos and anxiety, Jesus tells the sea to be still in order for the disciples to be calm. Nonetheless, it was not easy for the disciples to appreciate that they had no need to fear because Jesus was with them.

- Help me, Lord, to know that I need have no fear if Jesus is at my side,
- Give thanks for all those who donate so generously to ABM and AID. May God bless them for their open-handed and open-hearted generosity.

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The Birth of John the Baptist
– Monday 24 June 2024

- Isaiah 49.1-6; Psalm 139.1-11;
Acts 13.[16-21] 22-26; Luke 1.57-66, 80

John the Baptist is one of those few saints who has more than one day allocated to him in the Calendar. Today we celebrate his birth but we also celebrate his death on 29 August. During his public ministry he pointed others towards Jesus. May we not waste our lives, but rather, do the same.

- Jesus Christ, Son of God, may our manner of living point others towards you, not turn them away.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of *La Iglesia Filipina Independiente*, the Philippine Independent Church.

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St Peter and St Paul
– Saturday 29 June 2024

- Acts 12.1-11 or Ezekiel 34.11-16;
Psalm 87 or Psalm 34.1-10
2 Timothy 4.6-8 [9-16] 17-18; John 21.15-22

Today's gospel reading provides core instructions for the clergy. We see the Risen Jesus asking Peter three times whether he loves him. Each time Peter answers affirmatively, adding, 'you know that I love you'. In response Jesus commands him: 'Feed my lambs', 'Tend my sheep' and 'Feed my sheep'. Then Jesus gives him another command: 'Follow me.' Then Peter, right on cue, gives us an example of whataboutism. Exasperatedly Jesus has to bring him back to the matter at hand: 'Follow me.'

- Give thanks for the clergy of your parish and diocese, their fidelity to the gospel and their hard work.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Church of the Province of Myanmar.

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Ordinary Sunday 13 B
– Sunday 30 June 2024

- 2 Samuel 1.1, 17-27; Psalm 130;
2 Corinthians 8.[1-6] 7-15; Mark 5.21-43

Today's gospel sees Jesus healing a woman with a kind of haemorrhagic disease as well as Jairus' daughter who was at the point of death. Jesus tells the woman that her faith has made her whole and he tells Jairus not to fear, but rather, to believe. He says to the girl, *Talitha cum* – little girl, get up, in Aramaic. That phrase still means the same thing to those who speak Assyrian, otherwise known as neo-Aramaic, in the streets of Fairfield and surrounding suburbs in Sydney. Members of the Assyrian Church of the East, whose historic patriarchate is based in Iraq, now live in significant numbers in Sydney and Melbourne,

- Pray for the Church's healing ministry through the Guild of St Raphael, and though hospitals and clinics throughout the Anglican Communion.
- Give thanks for the witness of St George's College in East Jerusalem, praying that they will be able to withstand the lack of student pilgrims because of their dearth at this time of fighting.

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Coming of the Light
– Monday 1 July 2024

- Isaiah 58.8-11; Psalm 27;
2 Corinthians 4.5-6; John 12.35-47

In today's gospel we are told that Jesus 'cried aloud' (so something important follows) and said that whoever believes in him believes not in him but in God who sent him, and that whoever sees him sees God. He has come as a light into the world so that everyone can see God to whom he points. And then he shows his merciful character by telling us that 'I do not judge anyone who hears my words and does not keep them, for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world'. His mind is on salvation, not judgement.

- Give thanks for all those who brought the gospel to Australia, and for all those who continue its spread to new generations today.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church of Papua New Guinea, remembering especially today the staff and students at the Bishop Newton School of Theology in Popondetta.

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St Thomas

– Wednesday 3 July 2024 [Unless observed on 21 December]

- Habakkuk 2.1-4; Psalm 117;
Ephesians 2.19-22; John 20.24-29

We live in an age of scepticism. Yet as Thomas shows us, scepticism is no bad thing. It led him to be the first of the disciples to discern and proclaim Jesus' divinity. 'My Lord and my God' came out of his enquiring faith.

- Give thanks for doubt and the role it plays in faith as faith seeks understanding.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Primate of Australia, the Most Rev Geoff Smith

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Ordinary Sunday 14 B
– Sunday 7 July 2024

- 2 Samuel 5.1-5, 9-10; Psalm 48;
2 Corinthians 12.2-10; Mark 6.1-13

The people around Nazareth were not impressed by Jesus and his highfalutin' sermons. Indeed, they took offence at them. Maybe they felt that they were too good, too upmarket or perhaps too socially nice to need the message he had come to teach – unlike those other sinners over there. Whatever their impediment it amounted to just one thing: unbelief.

- Give thanks for all those whose minds are receptive to the Good News and pray that our minds may always be ready to hear Jesus' message to us.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia

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Ordinary Sunday 15 B
– Sunday 14 July 2024

- 2 Samuel 6.1-5, 12b-19; Psalm 24;
Ephesians 1.1-14; Mark 6.14-29

In today's gospel reading we learn of how John the Baptist was put to death by Herod Antipas. John had criticised Herod for marrying his brother's ex-wife, Herodias and she wanted him dead. Herod protected John because he knew John to be a just and holy man. Herodias used her daughter to effect her evil scheme. Before Herod's party ended John's head was on a platter.

- Pray for all political prisoners in the world, remembering especially those on death row. Pray for the abolition of the death penalty.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan.

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Ordinary Sunday 16 B
– Sunday 21 July 2024

- 2 Samuel 7.1-14a; Psalm 89.21-38;
Ephesians 2.11-22; Mark 6.30-34, 53-56

Today's gospel reading shows us that Jesus considered rest to be an important facet of ministry once in a while, and yet the pressure to minister remains, with 'sheep without a shepherd' and the sick being ever present. How can we encourage our clergy to work hard and to be able to take restful breaks so that they do not suffer burnout? How can lay people play a leadership role?

- Pray for all those parish priests and chaplains (and their families) who find it hard to be able to take breaks because it is difficult for them to arrange cover.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the *Nippon Sei Ko Kai*, the Anglican Church of Japan.

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St Mary Magdalene
– Monday 22 July 2024

- Song of Songs 3.1-4a; Psalm 63;
2 Corinthians 5.14-21; John 20.1-18

The Orthodox Church describes Mary Magdalene as 'Equal to the Apostles' or the 'Apostle to the Apostles' because she was the one who told Peter and John that the Lord had risen from the dead. There is an Akathist (a very long hymn with many long verses) which tells about her post-Resurrection role:

Rejoice, you who saw the true Gardener risen from the dead before all others!

Rejoice, you who now live in the garden of heaven!

Rejoice, you who first received tidings of the resurrection from the lips of Christ!

Rejoice, you who first announced the words of joy to the apostles!

Rejoice, O holy Mary Magdalene, equal of the apostles, who loved the sweetest Lord Jesus more than all good things!

- Give thanks for all who, like Mary Magdalene, love our sweet Lord above all the good things the world has to offer.
- Give thanks for the *Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui*, the Anglican Church of Hong Kong, remembering their work and witness.

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St James

– Thursday 25 July 2024

- Jeremiah 45; Psalm 126;
Acts 11.27—12.3 or 2 Corinthians 4.7-15;
Matthew 20.20-28

Junk television likes to present us with stage moms behaving badly. It's not just TV, though, as today we see the unnamed mother of James and John demanding special status for her boys. 'Declare that these two sons of mine will sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom,' she orders. Jesus' response to her, 'You do not know what you are asking' is a reasonable one. He then asks her sons, 'Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?' And they replied, 'We are able.' Like them, may we be prepared to follow Christ and to be ready, willing, and able to do what he requires of us.

- Give thanks for all those pilgrims who are able to walk the Camino de Santiago to Compostela this year. Pray that God would fill their hearts and minds with love.
- Give thanks for the Church of the Province of Central Africa, remembering especially the work of the Zambia Anglican Council.

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Ordinary Sunday 16 B

– Sunday 28 July 2024

- 2 Samuel 11.1-15; Psalm 14;
Ephesians 3.14-21; John 6.1-21

Three miracles in one reading – Jesus feeds the crowds, Jesus walks on water, and a boat turns up immediately at the shore of the land to which the disciples were heading. It's very easy to disparage miracles in our modern day. We like to rationalise much of what happens around us. But despite all that, miraculous things happen around us every day: the birth of a baby, the beauty of a flower, the love of a spouse or friend. Sure, these *can* be explained rationally, but isn't it better to know, for example, how love *feels* rather than being given a lecture about testosterone, oestrogen dopamine, norepinephrine, serotonin, oxytocin and vasopressin. Sorry, didn't mean to kill the moment!

- Lord, help us to see the miracles that occur all around us day by day. Help us never to lose our sense of wonder.
- Give thanks for the Church of North India, remembering especially today their ministry in a predominantly non-Christian context.

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