



ANGLICAN BOARD OF MISSION

Working for Love, Hope & Justice

Pew Reflections REFLECTIONS ABM

1 November 2024 – 26 January 2025

Readings from
An Australian Lectionary 2024
(Years B and C)

Written by
Br Christopher John SSF

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

– Mark Batterson

It is a pleasure to present the August to October 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,

Robert McLean
Key Relationships Coordinator
Partnerships Coordinator

Br Christopher John SSF



Brother Christopher John SSF is a member of the First Order of the Society of St Francis, the religious order of Anglican Franciscan brothers. From Aotearoa New Zealand originally, he now lives in Stroud, NSW at the Franciscan Hermitage. Currently he serves as minister general or international leader of his brothers and is away most of the year with Franciscans in different countries. He is also on the board of Franciscans International, the Franciscan NGO at the UN in Geneva and New York. When he can he enjoys reading, music and the quiet prayer life at Stroud.

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 – November 2024 to January 2025

All Saints' Day

– Friday 1 November 2024

- Isaiah 25.6-9 or Wisdom 3.1-9; Psalm 24; Revelation 21.1-6a; John 11.32-44

The ministry of Jesus could be summarised in the last words of today's gospel, "Unbind him, and let him go." Jesus, through what he said and did, set people free. He preached liberation from fear, freedom from oppression. We are called to be saints, agents of liberation in our current age.

- May we carry the good news of Jesus Christ to those we meet in daily life.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church of Kenya

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All Souls' Day

– Saturday 2 November 2024

- Job 14.1-14; Psalm 29; John 5.19-29

Jesus points out a stark choice. Eternal life with him, sharing in the life of God the Father, or the "resurrection of condemnation". The choice is ours. To grow in Christ so that our life here and beyond is "in Christ", or to place ourselves outside the body of Christ so that we become a stranger to Christ's life.

- Pray for the departed, those known and unknown. Especially for those who have died through violence, or unprepared for their death.
- 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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Ordinary Sunday 31 B

– Sunday 3 November 2024

- Ruth 1.1-18; Psalm 146; Hebrews 9.11-15; Mark 12.13-17, 28-34

The words about separating things belonging to the emperor from the things belonging to God point to the evil inherent in the emperor's way; corruption and oppression. Compare this with God's things. All that God has made is good. Christians are to affirm this goodness, and to challenge the political powers which destroy and oppress the poor and suffering and the weakest of society.

- Pray that we may know where there is good and affirm such goodness and also see where there is evil and speak against the powers of oppression.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Church of the Province of Myanmar

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Ordinary Sunday 32 B

– Sunday 10 November 2024

- Ruth 3.1-5; 4.3-17; Psalm 127; Hebrews 9.[19-22] 23-28; Mark 12.38-44

The words of the gospel are a challenge not only to people such as myself (who professionally do wear long robes!), but to all of us who are likely to have status in some form or other. The poor widow gave out of her poverty. And all of us before God have nothing except what God has given us.

- May we be like the widow, giving generously from our hearts, rather than sharing a few crumbs of the abundance God has given us.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Episcopal Church of Jerusalem and the Middle East

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Ordinary Sunday 33 B
– Sunday 17 November 2024

- 1 Samuel 1.4-20; The *Song of Hannah* (APBA p. 429); Hebrews 10.11-14 [15-18] 19-25; Mark 13.1-11

Today's gospel was written in the context of the persecution Christians were already beginning to experience. The words are to encourage them (as well as us) in times of trial, rather than point to a timetable for God's actions in the world. Whenever we challenge injustice or speak against the powers of oppression, then the powers will fight back, but we can trust that the Holy Spirit will give us the words we need.

- Pray for Christians round the world who face persecution because of their stand for justice.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Amity Foundation, created in 1985 on the initiative of Christians in China with the late Bishop K H Ting as its founder. Its main objective has been to help develop poor areas of the country.

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Ordinary Sunday 34 B – Christ the King
– Sunday 24 November 2024

- 2 Samuel 23.1-7 or Daniel 7.9-10, 13-14; Psalm 132.1-12 [13-18] or Psalm 93; Revelation 1.4b-8; John 18.33-37

Truth can be in short supply when self-interested political leaders are in charge. Jesus, in his trial before Pilate, indicates that his mission is grounded in truth. Those who belong to this truth listen to Jesus and are his followers. Pilate and his cynical ways are in the world of earthly power, a world far removed from seeking truth.

- Pray for the leaders of our nations. That they seek truth and the values of God's kingdom above all and work for the common good.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Episcopal Church in the Philippines

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St Andrew
– Saturday 30 November 2024

- Deuteronomy 30.11-14; Psalm 19.1-6; Romans 10.8-18; Matthew 4.18-22

The psalm we have just heard speaks in beautiful poetic language of God's Word in creation, spread through the heavens. Not by human work, but simply because God's Word, as the expression of God's creative power, spreads itself. Missionaries like Andrew don't so much take the Word, as help uncover its presence wherever they go.

- May we be like Andrew and the apostles. Ready to follow and eager to share the riches of God's good news in Jesus Christ.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Episcopal Church of Sudan

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Advent 1 C
– Sunday 1 December 2024

- Jeremiah 33.14-16; Psalm 25.1-10; 1 Thessalonians 3.9-13; Luke 21.25-38

As Advent begins, the words of the ancient prophets ring clear for us today as they did when first heard thousands of years ago. God's purposes will be worked out and God will make known the righteousness and justice and mercy which is at the heart of God's love and desire for all people.

- We pray that we may hear God's call to righteousness and justice, and so live by this way that we are agents too of God's good news of peace and love for all people.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church of Papua New Guinea, remembering especially today the Bishop-Designate of Port Moresby, the Very Rev'd Wilfred Kekea, as well as the recently-appointed new Principal for the Bishop Newton School of Theology, the Rev'd Dr Ishaya Anthony, as well as the other staff and students.

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Advent 2 C

– Sunday 8 December 2024

- Malachi 3.1-14; *The Song of Zechariah* (APBA p. 425);
Philippians 1.1-11; Luke 3.1-6

Malachi's voice rings loud and clear. The Lord is coming. Not as a jolly Santa but coming to cleanse. The Lord's own righteousness will expose and purify that which is not of God. The message is clear: turn from evil and do good by doing justice.

- May our ears be open to the insistent voice of God calling for us to be people of justice.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia

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Advent 3 C

– Sunday 15 December 2024

- Zephaniah 3.14-20; *A Song of Isaiah* (APBA p. 391);
Philippians 4.4-7; Luke 3.7-18

Although prophets often have words of judgement or even condemnation, they also reassure by reminding us of God's overall purposes of love and goodness. Those who have unjustly suffered rejection or disaster will be restored. Past wrongs will be set to right, and we can again rejoice.

- We pray that God's love and goodness may once again be known to those who have unjustly suffered.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Alliance for Development, Relief and Advocacy

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St Thomas

– Saturday 21 December 2024

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

Prophets do not so much "foretell" as "forth tell". They tell forth God's word to the situation around them. They speak truth to power. Although God may seem to tarry, God's purposes cannot be stopped.

- May we be like the apostles, ready to carry God's word, to tell it forth, and proclaim God's goodness and love, overcoming all evil.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Church of South India, remembering their ministry in a predominantly non-Christian context.

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Advent 4 C

– Sunday 22 December 2024

- Micah 5.2-5a; The *Song of Zechariah* (APBA p. 31); Hebrews 10.5-10; Luke 1.29-45 [46-55]

Micah speaks of the paradox of Bethlehem, one of the least, being the birthplace of a great one who will rule over Israel. Those who knew only the insignificance of Bethlehem but who had forgotten this prophecy would criticise Jesus for his origins. The paradox remains for us, that out of smallness can come greatness.

- We pray that our senses are open to see God's greatness even in the small and seemingly insignificant.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church of Melanesia.

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Christmas Day I

– Wednesday 25 December 2024

- Isaiah 9.2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2.11-14; Luke 2.1-14 [15-20]

Isaiah bursts with joy as he describes the coming of the saviour-liberator, like light in darkness. All the longings of the people for freedom are fulfilled in this prophecy. We hear these words thousands of years later, and see a prophecy of Christ, and they are. But they also remain concrete words of reassurance for all who suffer that's God's action and desire reach into the very specifics of history to set people free.

- Pray for all who "sit in darkness", that they come to know the light which brings healing, restoration, and whatever it is they need in order to know joy in their lives once again.
- Give thanks for USPG, the United Society Partners in the Gospel, remembering their work and witness.

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Christmas Day II

– Wednesday 25 December 2024

- Isaiah 62.6-12; Psalm 97; Titus 3.4-8a; Luke 2.[1-7] 8-20

The psalm writer speaks of all creation rejoicing before God – everything and everyone. Light has dawned for the righteous. Light too has dawned in a local specific way for those shepherds who then hurried to see the Source of the Light of the Universe, made small in a manger in Bethlehem. The universal has met the local. Big is made small.

- May we too rejoice with those shepherds to see and know the King of the Universe, born as a child, born for us.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Church of North India, remembering their ministry in a predominantly non-Christian context.

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Christmas Day III

– Wednesday 25 December 2024

- Isaiah 52.7-10; Psalm 98; Hebrews 1.1-4 [5-12]; John 1.1-14

We've heard again the story of the birth in Bethlehem, and now we reflect on it theologically. Drawing from the biblical riches, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews leads to a powerful climax. God's Son is the reflection and exact imprint of God's very being. Not less, but fully equal.

- Pray that all people may know Jesus, not just as prophet, sage or teacher, but as God.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Mothers' Union throughout the Anglican Communion

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St Stephen

– Thursday 26 December 2024

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

The whole universe has beheld the glory of God in the Word made Flesh. And now the first witness, Stephen, gives testimony to the specifics of his vision. The young man Saul sees and hears and remembers, but like a seed sown in the ground, it will be some time before God's Word and Stephen's witness bears fruit in him.

- We give thanks for the martyrs and pray that their witness may also bear fruit in our own lives as we too witness to the Word made Flesh, and the Word living in us.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of Alongside Hope/Auprès de l'espoir (formerly the Anglican Church of Canada's Primate's World Relief and Development Fund).

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St John the Evangelist

– Friday 27 December 2024

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

Take the epistle reading slowly. The verbs pile up as John writes about his experience of encountering God. Declare, "was from the beginning", heard, seen looked at, touched, testify and declare (twice). It's a breathless list. All of this leads to his declaration of fellowship with the Father and the Son, and that God is light.

- We pray that we may experience God with all our senses, know God with our intellect, and direct all our energy to proclaiming God and his Son Jesus Christ.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Church of the Province of Central Africa

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Holy Innocents

– Saturday 28 December 2024

- Jeremiah 31.15-20; Psalm 124; 1 John 1.5 – 2.2; Matthew 2.13-18

Lamentation and bitter weeping were heard in response to Herod's slaughter of the innocents. Every day on our television we also see lamentation and bitter weeping in response to the mindless violence caused by political leaders who prefer genocide to the courageous way of negotiation and seeking peace. And each time it is the innocent who suffer.

- May our leaders have the courage and vision to seek peace and unity, rather than stirring up division and hatred.
- Give thanks for the work of and witness of the *Nippon Sei Ko Kai*, the Anglican Church in Japan, remembering their ministry in a predominantly non-Christian context.

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Christmas I C

– Sunday 29 December 2024

- 1 Samuel 2.18-20, 26; Psalm 148; Colossians 3.12-17; Luke 2.41-52

Samuel was clothed in the linen ephod of service in the temple. And the epistle speaks of being clothed in compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience and above all in love. Like Samuel we too serve God through our lives, our worship, and above all through doing everything in the name of the Lord Jesus.

- We pray that we may be filled with love, binding together all else, as we serve God and others.
- Give thanks for the work of and witness of *La Iglesia Filipina Independiente*, the Philippine Independent Church

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The Naming and Circumcision of our Lord – Wednesday 1 January 2025

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

The theme of naming runs through these readings, from the Israelites, under the name of the Lord, and belonging to the Lord, through to the evocative image of what it means to be God's adopted children, able to call on God as Father. And then reaching its climax in the giving of the name Jesus ("God saves") to the child born in the manger in Bethlehem, circling back to God's saving purposes through all history.

- May we know Jesus as the saving power and grace of God, the loving Father
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Church of the Province of South-East Asia, remembering their ministry in a predominantly non-Christian context.

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Christmas 2 C – Sunday 5 January 2025

- Jeremiah 31.7-14 or Sirach 24.1-12;
Psalm 147.12-20 or Wisdom 10.15-21;
Ephesians 3.1-12; John 1.[1-9] 10-18

The opening words of John's gospel, heard in our Christmas worship, continue to echo through our churches and in our lives. The Word became flesh and lived among us. The mighty creative power of God, the Word who called forth universes and atoms, this same Word is now flesh, and living among us.

- Give thanks for God's presence with us, God who we know not only as the mighty force in all creation, but intimately, closer than our own flesh and blood.
- Give thanks for the Church of Pakistan, remembering their ministry in a predominantly non-Christian context.

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The Epiphany of our Lord – Monday 6 January 2025

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

The Epiphany of our Lord is the showing forth or the revealing of God to all people. The mysterious kings and camels from the east are a sign of this; not from among the “chosen people” but now they too are caught up in the vision and worship of what has happened in Bethlehem. We too can see the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, and now opened to all people.

- We pray that we can know that God’s life and saving message is for all people, regardless of their origin or their background.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the *Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui*, the Anglican Church in Hong Kong.

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Ordinary Sunday 1 C – The Baptism of our Lord – Sunday 12 January 2025

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

Isaiah’s words are a wonderful encouragement in a time of distress and a reminder that God’s people have nothing to fear since God has redeemed them. They can pass through fire and water without harm. The psalmist also talks of the powers of destruction, and yet the people will be saved and blessed. Images which are present as we read of the baptism of Jesus who entered the waters of baptism that we too may know him as God’s beloved Son.

- We pray for all preparing for baptism; and for those of us already baptised, we give thanks for those who led us to putting on Christ in the waters of baptism.
- Give thanks for the Church of Ceylon, which covers most of Sri Lanka, remembering their ministry in a multi-religious context.

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Ordinary Sunday 2 C – Sunday 19 January 2025

- Isaiah 62.1-5; Psalm 36.5-10;
1 Corinthians 12.1-11; John 2.1-11

Isaiah gives hope as he prophesies the restoration and vindication of God’s people and that they shall again be beautiful and restored to God’s intimate presence. In the gospel we hear of a different transformation. It’s a sign which reveals God’s glory as water is turned into the wine of gladness.

- May our eyes be open to the signs of God’s glory in the world around us, in miracles small or great.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Episcopal Church of South Sudan.

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The Conversion of St Paul – Saturday 25 January 2025

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

The readings from Acts and Galatians tell of how the young man who was at the stoning of Stephen has now had his eyes opened to the same message that Stephen preached. That message is at heart simple. Jesus is Messiah, the fulfilment of scripture, and his followers are to proclaim repentance and forgiveness of sins in his name. Paul now does the same, and like Stephen, his witness will lead to martyrdom.

- We pray for all preachers and missionaries, and ourselves in our own lives. May we be like Paul, ready to proclaim Jesus Christ in word and action.
- Give thanks for the work and witness of the Anglican Church of Korea.

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Ordinary Sunday 3 C
– Sunday 26 January 2025

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

Jesus comes to preach in his hometown, not always the easiest of tasks! His message is simple and profound. He quotes from Isaiah's prophecy of freedom and liberation. And simply states that this prophecy is now fulfilled. The core of the teaching of Jesus is simply the Good News that oppression and captivity are ended and are not part of God's will.

- May all people know the Good News that God brings freedom and release from captivity.
- Give thanks for the work and mission of Episcopal Relief and Development, based in the USA.

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Australia Day
– Sunday 26 January 2025

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

Today's scripture readings offer a vision of some of what makes for peaceful living in society. Having families and planting gardens are signs of stability. Seeking the welfare of the city, and so on. But these are no easy answers, and today's commemoration should sharpen our sensitivity to the needs of all, the common good, and particularly to the cries of those who have most often suffered oppression.

- Pray that in celebrating our national identity our eyes are opened ever wider to see all who have suffered, that we work together for the common good of all.
- Give thanks for the work and mission of Episcopal Relief and Development, based in the USA.

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