

Reflect



1. What do you hear this passage saying about power?
How is power redefined in the person of Jesus?
2. In Jesus Christ the kingdom of God is made known upon earth. What are its characteristics?
3. As the body of Christ, how can we be ambassadors of the kingdom, particularly the characteristic of reconciliation, in the world?

Act



- Mark National Reconciliation Week in your diary and calendar: 27 May – 3 June.
When it gets closer find out how you can get involved.

Pray



- God of community, we give you thanks for diversity.
Help us to work for reconciliation so that we may be enriched by our differences and learn from one another.
Amen.

Lent Week 1

Lent greetings from ABM! Over the coming weeks we invite you to journey with us across the globe. We will visit six regions and hear about the work that some of ABM's partners are doing.

Every week there will be a Bible study included on the Sunday's Gospel reading, these studies have been written by The Revd Prof. Dorothy Lee, Trinity College, Melbourne. Included also, is a prayer and an action for the week.

The overall theme for ABM's Lent resources is "Mission is... possible." We will look at six characteristics of mission: working for reconciliation; building amity; embracing kindness; doing justice; and walking a way of peace. We pray your Lent journey toward the Cross and Resurrection may be a transformative experience.



Lent Week 1

Mission is... Working for Reconciliation

ABM's Reconciliation Program

The Anglican Board of Mission supports six Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander projects.

After discussions with the General Synod Office and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Anglican Council, ABM decided to create a new role to assist these projects – a Reconciliation Officer.

The Reconciliation Officer, Mal Maccallum, has been with ABM for almost a year and has already carried out a lot of wonderful work. Mal has big plans for the future and explains how further funding will assist. "We all know the gap of disadvantage is a long way from being closed and stopped for good. Extra support would assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ministries' by setting up new projects in as many areas as possible", said Mal.

"We could introduce a support/ education program for young teenage mothers who need a significant level of support to cope with parenthood. We could assist youth workers and work towards breaking the cycles that create dysfunction in remote communities. We can build partnerships between main stream urban churches and isolated remote community churches to facilitate valuable exchange and support". Please pray for this program.

Diocese of Bathurst – the Rev Gloria Shipp

The Rev Gloria Shipp's work within Walkabout Ministries in the Diocese of Bathurst aims to empower people and encourage transformation in lives through fellowship.

Gloria works on a variety of activities including Women's Dinners, weekly Elders groups, Sunday services, Juvenile Justice Centre chaplaincy, Camps for the Indigenous and non-Indigenous community, as well as baptisms, weddings and funerals. Her ministry is shared with her husband and other helpers.

As the Chairperson of NATSIAC (National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Anglican Council) many hours are spent with administration and organisation of travel to gatherings and meetings for all other members. Her responsibilities as the NATSIAC Chair are an encouragement to all members across the country.

Other challenges for Gloria include ongoing support of the boys she is Chaplain to at Orana Juvenile Justice Centre. This work requires resilience and positivity to support the boys in difficult situations. Financial support from ABM provides administration support and contributes to Gloria's stipend.

Bible Study: Matthew 4. 1-11

This passage from Matthew's Gospel describes the three temptations of Jesus in the wilderness, following on from his baptism and leading into the beginning of his ministry in Galilee. It may seem a strange story to us, but it captures something essential about Jesus' mission.

In the baptism, the divine voice proclaims Jesus as God's Beloved Son, and the Spirit descends on him like a dove. Now, in the temptation story, Jesus has to demonstrate that he truly is God's Son. He does so in each temptation by quoting Scripture by which he asserts his total dependence on God and his refusal to use illegitimate means to gain power.

People often interpret the Temptation story as an example to us of how we should behave when we are tempted. Here Jesus is seen as a model for us of how to behave in times of difficulty. We are to show the same constancy, the same resistance to evil, the same worship of God alone, as Jesus displays.

But Matthew's story has more to it than that. There are a number of parallels with the Old Testament that give us the clue to Matthew's meaning. The context of the wilderness, the number forty, and Jesus' hunger all remind us of the exodus experience of the children of God, as they journeyed from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land. But that story, in

the Old Testament, is one of rebellion, lack of trust and idolatry on the part of God's people; they fail to honour the covenant.

By contrast, Jesus also spends time in the wilderness, but this time he gets it right. As the true 'Child of God', Jesus replays Israel's story and achieves that fulfillment of the covenant at which Israel failed again and again. To put this in broader times, for Matthew, Jesus in the Temptation story replays our human story of alienation, inability to love and worship God, and idolatry, and re-makes our humanity, on our behalf. All the qualities of the kingdom of heaven — reconciliation, peace, justice, love — can now become a reality in the world because Jesus has achieved them in his life and in his death. He is the means of reconciliation between us and God, and calls us to be ambassadors of reconciliation in the world.

– *The Rev Prof. Dorothy Lee*
Trinity College, Melbourne

Reflect



1. How do you respond to eternal life beginning in the here-and-now? What implications does this here-and-now eternal life have for how we live on earth?
2. Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote about the “cost of discipleship”. Being born from above calls forth an ‘entirely new way of being and acting’. Nicodemus eventually embraced the cost of discipleship as he risked his status to honour Jesus in his burial. How do you respond to the challenge of the “cost of discipleship”?
3. How might the church build amity, or friendship, within communities? How can we make known God’s relationship of love, in which we live and move and have our being?

Act



Focus on relationships: Tonight turn off your TV, mobile phone and computer and spend time with your family and/or friends.

Pray



Loving God, we give you thanks for the work of ABM and The Amity Foundation in China. We pray for a spirit of love in all that we do, and that your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

www.abmission.org

Lent Week 2

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Health care promotion activities are run by the Amity Foundation in China to raise awareness and to educate communities. © ABM/Julianne Stewart 2012.

Lent Week 2

Mission is... Building Amity

The Amity Foundation, China: Community-based HIV Prevention and Health Care Promotion

The Amity Foundation is a large Chinese Christian NGO established in 1985. The Amity Foundation has strong links to the worldwide Anglican Church and assists tens of millions of people in China through innovative social programs.

This year ABM is helping to fund an Amity project focusing on HIV Prevention and Health Care Promotion. Almost half of the health workers working in the area this project will target indicated they did not know how HIV was spread.

It is this lack of knowledge that increases the community stigma for people living with HIV. This health project in Fengping district in Yunnan Province, China aims to improve the livelihoods of the people living with HIV, decrease the stigma and improve the capacity of local health workers.

In the target locations, a baseline survey showed that 91% of people living with HIV feel excluded from the general community. In order to improve the livelihoods and self-esteem of these people, the project will establish care and support groups, run agricultural training, and administer microloans.

Care and support groups are particularly targeted at injecting drug users, who are the key risk population in the area. The health and confidence of people living with HIV will be improved by providing

opportunities for social interaction, counselling, nutrition assistance as well as physical checkups.

To meet the second aim of improving the capacity of local health services to respond to and treat HIV and related conditions, the Amity Foundation, in cooperation with the Chinese Health Bureau, will work closely with local health facilities to improve the knowledge and skills of health workers to respond to HIV, and provide clinics with the necessary equipment.

100 health workers from town and village health centres will receive training from the Centre for Disease Control experts three times each year. This training will reduce current high levels of stigma towards people with HIV and health workers will learn how to recognise and treat anti-opportunistic infections.

The baseline survey also showed that up to 90% of general community members hold incorrect beliefs about modes of HIV infection.

10,000 villagers and 150 village leaders will be targeted with HIV-related information, and 84 community activities will be undertaken throughout the life of the project. These activities will be implemented by local Women's Associations in cooperation with established groups for people living with HIV, with the aim of improving community understanding of the virus, leading to reduced levels of discrimination towards people living with HIV.

Bible Study: John 3. 1-17

This section of John's Gospel, which sees Jesus travelling in a wide circle from Galilee to Jerusalem and back again, shows different responses to Jesus in those he encounters. We find faith, misunderstanding and rejection within this one cycle.

The overall theme is that of entry into eternal life, a life that begins in the here-and-now in relationship with God. In this episode, Jesus is in Jerusalem and meets one of the leaders of the Pharisees who approaches Jesus secretly by night.

From the beginning of the conversation, Jesus turns Nicodemus' careful and ordered life on its head. Ignoring the civilities, Jesus challenges him to experience a new birth: an entirely new way of being and acting. 'Born from above' is a better translation than 'born again', since the focus is on the creative, life-giving work of the Holy Spirit in drawing people to new life. In spite of his theological credentials, however, Nicodemus struggles to understand.

Behind the gift which Jesus offers lies the radical love of God for the world and the mysterious working of the Holy Spirit. God's love is life-giving, illuminating those who are willing to accept it. It is present above all in Jesus himself, in his life and his saving death, which draws everyone without limitation into the life and love of God.

At this point in John's Gospel, Nicodemus is unable to accept Jesus' challenge; he disappears from the story. After Jesus' crucifixion, however, we encounter him again. Now Nicodemus joins Joseph of Arimathea in burying Jesus with a sumptuous load of spices. These two powerful men risk their reputations, status and wealth in order to bury a convicted criminal. Nicodemus' risky actions are the expression of the new life he has at last found – a new relationship of love into which he has been drawn.

It may take him a long time, but Nicodemus gets there in the end. The same is true for us, and it is an encouraging message in our journey of faith. Sometimes we are slow learners, and find it hard to grasp the depths of the divine love in Christ; our faith is slow and weak. But in the end, through all our struggles, God's love holds and sustains us, just as it holds and sustains the whole world.

– *The Rev Prof. Dorothy Lee*
Trinity College, Melbourne

Reflect



1. Jesus offers the Samaritan woman the living water. How have you experienced this living water in your own life?
2. When considering “loving your neighbour”, do you put boundaries on who is neighbour and who is not?
3. In this passage Jesus, once again, draws open the reign of God to those who are considered outsiders. In the new life that Jesus offers, the division between insider and outsider, between neighbour and stranger, between male and female, between Jew and Gentile are abolished. Who are the “outsiders” in our society? How does this Gospel passage challenge our approach to them?

Act



Global justice starts locally: Get to know your neighbour (if your under 18 make sure your speak with your parents/ guardian before doing this).

Pray



God of all, we give you thanks for ABM’s partners in the pacific. We pray that we may show love to our closest international neighbours in word and action. In all we do this day help us to love you and our neighbour. Amen.

Lent Week 3

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Lent Week 3

Mission is... Loving your Neighbour

Anglican Church of Melanesia: Bildim Ap – Mothers' Union Leadership Empowerment

This initiative is aimed at capacity building for the Mothers' Union to deliver services to the grassroots community in Melanesia, including the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and New Caledonia.

The Mothers' Union is a strong arm of the Anglican Church of Melanesia, with around 16,000 members in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

The needs of women and families are great and the Mothers' Union is struggling to do as much as it can to help. Leadership is a problem at all levels, and especially in rural areas where there are not many women who feel able to become office bearers.

Although they are capable, they lack confidence. Therefore, leadership training and confidence building are very necessary elements of Mothers' Union input into delivering effective services and mission to impact peoples' lives.

This project gives support to the dioceses for capacity building to strengthen administration and leadership at all levels of the Mothers' Union.

Throughout 2013, visits have been made to Dioceses by the Provincial Mothers' Union Team to conduct participatory workshops to identify the strengths that each area could build on.

The team has been welcomed to the Diocese of Temotu and Diocese of Hanuato'o. They said they did not come with the answers to every question but were there to help the Mothers' Union

members in each diocese to identify their own strengths and weaknesses. They also wanted to see what good things were happening in order to build and help them work more effectively in their leadership roles.

The participants were ready for this new experience and they identified areas to build capacity such as leadership, planning, money and financial matters.

Edith Koete, President of Provincial MU in the Anglican Church of Melanesia:

"Our training aims to encourage relevant and dynamic leadership development for our growing community, society and the church. We are working to become effective witnesses of Christ in the most challenging situations of today and seek to be faithful to the aims and purpose of the MU.

"There are battles going on in the families, communities, churches, and societies every day. Battles of deep and critical issues and problems on prostitution, trafficking, violence, and abuse affecting families, young people, men and women."

"This means that we in the Mothers' Union must have the passion of sharing the gospel of Christ in our work, that brings life and gives hopes to the people and families we are looking after. All these challenges ask us to have a fresh vision of leadership so that we can have the inspiration and courage in working together with the people we serve, right at the heart of their own communities, sowing together the seeds of hope which will flourish into transformed future for families of all kinds. Our major programs and activities enable us to do just that, in order to foster strong families and independent communities."

Bible Study: John 4. 5-42

In the previous chapter of John's Gospel, we met a wealthy and influential Jewish man, who has name and status in his community, who is theologically educated and yet who struggles to understand Jesus' message.

Now, in this story, we meet someone who is the very opposite of Nicodemus: a woman of no status, no name, no theological learning, no wealth or influence. She is also a Samaritan which means, in effect, an unclean Gentile, outside the people of God and the covenant. Yet she, the outsider, reaches a much deeper level of faith than does Nicodemus.

This is a story of overturning. Jesus begins the conversation by presenting himself as the thirsty person and the woman as the water-giver. Within moments, however, the roles are reversed. It turns out that, from a spiritual point of view, Jesus is the water-giver and the woman the one who is thirsty.

At first, the Samaritan does not grasp what Jesus is saying. Like Nicodemus, she takes him very literally, not realising that he is speaking of a spiritual reality that goes beyond, and challenges, narrow definitions of who belongs and who does not. Slowly but surely, however, she begins to see. Jesus opens her life to her, revealing the mess of relationships, all of which

conceal a deep thirst for life. And at once the penny drops. She realises that he is speaking of a deeper level of reality, a reality that transcends differences of race, culture, and gender. Jesus himself is the centre of this new life, which refuses to accept the division between insider and outsider, between neighbour and stranger, between male and female, between Jew and Gentile.

In the end, the woman leaves behind her water jar and runs to fetch the villagers. As they approach him, Jesus speaks to the disciples about the fields 'white for harvest', referring to the approaching Samaritans. When they reach him, they express their own faith, and acknowledge him as 'the Saviour of the world'. He is the Saviour, not just of the insiders but also the outsiders; not just the Jews but also the Gentiles; not just men but also women. God in Christ enters into a transforming and life-giving relationship not just with the chosen few but with all.

– The Rev Prof. Dorothy Lee
Trinity College, Melbourne

Reflect



1. Because of his blindness, the man in this gospel reading would have been an outsider, living on the margins of society. Jesus shines God's light on the darkness of exclusion and oppression by radically including and healing the man. How have you experienced God's kindness in your life?
2. In this reading 'the stuff of earth' is used to heal the man born blind. How might we as a Church, striving to be a community of kindness, use the 'stuff of earth' to share God's liberation with those living on the margins of society? What needs liberating in your own life?
3. What does 'naming the darkness with courage' mean to you? What does it look like?

Act



Global justice starts locally: make someone smile each day this week.

Pray



Merciful God, thank you for ABM's partners in Asia. You are slow to anger and quick to show compassion. Help us to embrace this same kindness in all of our endeavours this day. Amen.

Lent Week 4

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Lent Week 4

Mission is... Embracing Kindness

The Episcopal Church in the Philippines: Evangelism and Christian Education

Each year this project directly assists 50,000 people who come to learn the Christian story and strengthen their faith.

This project aims to create a strong mutual ministry in 2014. This mutual ministry will develop lay ministry through Christian Education in partnership with the clergy.

Encouraging churches to become self-sufficient and share resources with laity will help to build a Christian Education program that reaches 160,000 people in the Philippines.

It is anticipated that new activities and materials will be developed to enhance lay ministries as well as continuing to strengthen activities among clergy that cover spirituality and shared ministry.

Such activities will be conducted yearly through spiritual retreats, seminars and workshops.

ABM's partner, the Episcopal Church in the Philippines, aims to empower and challenge churches to become self-sufficient and, in turn, to help smaller churches reach financial autonomy.

The Evangelism and Christian Education Program Coordinator said, "Their churchmanship will be deepened leading to a more meaningful Christian life and active participation to the life and work of the church."

"The vision is to also open new mission opportunities, create more programs and better support clergy and other personnel," he said.

If you choose to support this project, your support will share the Christian story with thousands who will come to know Jesus.

The Episcopal Church in the Philippines & the Philippines Independent Church: Community Capacity Building

"Kunak no saantay nga maaramind daytoy idi damo"

("I thought we would not be able to accomplish this when we started.")

said the gentleman. His neighbour responded and said,

"Apay ket nga saan no agkaykaysa tayo amin nga agrabaho."

("Why not, if we all work together?")

This is a conversation that took place between two members of the Kabiraoan community in the northern Philippines as they and their fellow villagers were resting after lunch at the site of the reservoir tank where they had laid out the pipes that would bring water to the community.

The Community Capacity Building Program is engaging with 14 new communities where ABM works in partnership with the Episcopal Church in the Philippines and the Philippines Independent Church, to empower local communities to work together to solve problems and change lives for the better.

Bible Study: John 9. 1-41

The story of the healing of the man born blind is one of the most evocative stories in John's Gospel. It is part of a wider section dealing with the theme of Jewish festivals. In each case, the deeper meaning of the Feast is found in Jesus himself.

In this case, the Feast is that of Tabernacles which revolves around two main rituals: water (poured on the altar each morning of the Feast) and light (candles lighting up the Temple in Jerusalem each evening). Both symbols are present in the story of the man born blind, pointing to Jesus as the Light of the world and the Giver of living water, which is the Holy Spirit.

This is an unusual story because Jesus is absent for most of the action. He is only present at the beginning and the end, in the first and last scenes, which are the only occasions the man born blind meets him. Jesus heals him, too, in an unusual way, by smearing mud mixed with spittle on his eyes and instructing him to wash them in the Pool of Siloam. It is significant that Jesus uses the stuff of earth to heal him, because in fact the man has never had sight, and Jesus here creates that sight for the first time; just as God made Adam from the dust of the earth (Gen 2:7).

In the scenes which follow, the now-seeing man is forced to endure a series of interrogations that become

increasingly hostile, to the man himself, to his parents, and to the absent Jesus. The more aggressive the authorities appear, however, the more confident the man becomes as he reflects on his own experience and on the identity of his healer. Slowly but surely he moves towards faith in Jesus. Finally, the authorities abuse him roundly and throw him out of their presence.

In the last scene, Jesus approaches him and draws the man into full faith. The liberating kindness of God now replaces the excluding hostility of the authorities. Jesus pronounces divine judgement against the powerful who hurt and destroy those who are vulnerable and needy. We too are called into the light of life in the darkness of the world, and called to name that darkness with courage. The Light of the world promises to be with us, guiding and directing us, transforming us from a community that excludes to a community of kindness and compassion.

– *The Rev Prof. Dorothy Lee*
Trinity College, Melbourne

Reflect



1. Mary and Martha, faced with the death of their brother, had different responses to Jesus. Try to imagine what you would have said to Jesus faced with a similar situation.
2. "Unbind him and let him go." These words show the freedom and authority that Jesus has, even over the power of death. What are you bound by? What prevents you from living life fully and freely?
3. Who are those bound by death-dealing powers in our society? What does the call to do justice mean when faced with such situations of captivity?

Act



Find a Fair Trade variety of something that you purchase from the supermarket.

Pray



Loving God, we give you thanks for the work of ABM's partners in Africa. Renew the Australian Church in its struggle for justice. Help us this week to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with you. Amen.

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Lent Week 5

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These women in Kenya are helping to construct a water project for their village. The project was initiated by the Anglican Church. © ABM/Steve Daughtry 2011.

Lent Week 5

Mission is... Doing Justice

Anglican Church of Kenya: Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is a Christian Education program that builds young children's faith and encourages them to develop a conscious and intimate relationship with God.

The Catechesis is divided into three levels, split into age groups from 3 to 12. The catechist acts as facilitator of the children's self-discovery of the meaning of these things for themselves. The program covers the essentials of faith and all three levels include presentations on the Sacraments, the Bible, Geography, Infancy and Passion Narratives, Prophecies, and Parables, in an age-relevant way.

This faith development program is one that provides firm foundations for children and is being very well received in Kenya by both children and their families.

The Archbishop has heard this positive feedback and wants it to spread all over Kenya. His Diocese includes the huge Kibera slum where there is a need to grow faith in the children there as well as in other slums and poor rural areas.

The church in Kenya has requested ABM provide funding to help to further develop the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd children's ministry there.

In 2014 the church aims to further develop a training area for leaders in Nairobi, to grow this ministry in the Kibera slum and to further train its Formation Leaders.

Given the success in Kenya, it is hoped some funding will also go to develop this ministry in Uganda and South Sudan.

Machakos Diocese Leadership and Management Training – Phase 2

In 2013, 1590 leaders from 106 parishes were trained in readiness for the division of Machakos diocese into two dioceses of Makueni and Machakos. Thanks to the growth of the church in this region of Kenya there are two Dioceses, each with their own Bishop.

The next step in this project is important as it addresses the leadership challenges and problems faced by the community. Since the dioceses are experiencing rapid growth, this calls for good leaders and for the community members to be strong in terms of having sustainable and diverse livelihoods. This will mean that they can contribute positively to the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Phase 2 is to train 'trainers' to continue the work and spread the learning. There are inadequate skills for leadership and management roles in the church so this training is very important.

Generally people who attend church in these regions are poor and lack options for livelihood improvements that would enable them to be in a position of supporting the mission work.

The training will also focus on the socio-economic status of the people who attend church and aim to build improvements for the general community.

Each of the two Dioceses will hold a two-day vision conference aiming to upgrade the leadership and management skills for the struggling parishes in both dioceses.

This visioning will culminate with training of the trainers who will be empowered to then continue with more training in the future.

Bible Study: John 11. 1-45

The story of the raising of Lazarus is the climax, in John's Gospel, of the public ministry of Jesus. It serves a dual function in the Gospel. Not only is it the culmination of the seven great signs of Jesus' ministry; it also sets the Passion narrative in motion.

As a consequence of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead, many of the Jewish people come to faith in him. This, in turn, leads Caiaphas and the authorities in Jerusalem to decide to get rid of Jesus, once and for all.

In some ways, this story is as much the faith of Martha and Mary, the two sisters of Lazarus, as it is about Lazarus. The whole family are disciples of Jesus, since the language of friendship in John's Gospel is the language of discipleship, and they naturally turn to him in their need. The sisters are women of faith, but their faith at this point is somewhat limited. Martha, for example, makes it clear that she believes in the future resurrection of the dead. But she does not yet fully realise that Jesus himself is the Resurrection and the Life – not just for the future but also for the present. When Jesus reaches the tomb, she tries to prevent him opening it, appalled at the terrible stench of death. Here again she does not fully understand who Jesus is and what his presence means. Even so, she has already made the core Christian confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, a confession of faith that in the other Gospels belongs to Peter.

The same is true of her sister Mary, who throws herself at Jesus' feet in disappointment and grief that he was unable to come and save her beloved brother from death. Yet in the very next chapter, she anoints Jesus' feet with costly and sweet-smelling oil, in a gesture that expresses her faith and awareness of what Jesus has done.

The emerging of Lazarus from the tomb is replete with images of life and freedom. Only the voice of God can penetrate the stone walls of Lazarus' tomb. Only Christ can speak to the dead so that they hear his voice. Only he can draw Lazarus from death to life, giving him that abundant life in the present moment which is God's great gift. This gift of life is not only for the world-to-come, but is capable of transforming all our experiences of 'death' in the midst of life. Jesus is the source of liberating life for us, and for all the world, in the present as much as the future.

– *The Rev Prof. Dorothy Lee*
Trinity College, Melbourne

Reflect



1. In the face of the cross Jesus retains dignity and majesty. What implications does worshipping a “king” who was enthroned on a cross rather than in fine palaces of gold and silver, a God who has experienced the depths of suffering, have for 21st Century life?
2. Who are those that still experience “crucifixion” (abuse, violence, torture and death) today? What does it mean for us to walk a way of peace when faced with such “crucifixions”?
3. In Jesus, the kingdom of God has pushed its way into the human situation revealing God’s new world to the earth, where violence is ended, and human beings and creation live peacefully in love. This world is now and not yet. What does it mean for the Church, as the body of Christ, to participate in this now and not yet reign of God?

Act



Learn the word for ‘peace’ in the Arabic language and in the Hebrew language by asking someone at church. Then teach them to a friend.

Pray



Holy God, we pray that your will may be done on earth as it is in heaven. Help us to walk a way of peace in the week ahead. Amen.

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The Sunday of the Passion (Palm Sunday)

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Mission is... Walking a way of Peace

The Episcopal Church in the Province of Jerusalem and the Middle East: Al-Ahli Arab Hospital – Child Nutrition

In the Gaza Strip, there is not one family who has escaped the affect of the ongoing political violence. Loss of life, injury and the loss of income has touched everyone, with poverty and poor health continuing to increase.

In 2014, ABM is supporting an outreach of Al-Ahli Arab hospital into the local community: the Child Nutrition Project.

This project will target children in the Gaza Strip who need health services. The hospital staff will especially focus on those living in poverty and suffering from disease.

The social unit of the hospital will also work with children who are malnourished and ensure community partners can work with families on other facets of life.

All children who benefit from the program will receive treatment for three months from a medical team. Follow up care and health education will also be provided. If ongoing treatment is needed it will also be achieved through partnership.

Sawsan Aranki-Batato, head of the Diocesan Programs Development Department in the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem said, "In Palestine the needs are massive so it's crucial to prioritise the needs because of limited financial resources."

"Thank you to ABM and the Australian church for the great support you are providing. This really helps us sustain our Diocesan services that we can provide to the needy people and it is highly appreciated. Particularly we are so excited for your contribution to the medical centre because it's in great need in Palestine. Thank you," she said.

Community Library in Addis Ababa

ABM supports St Matthew's Community Library in Addis Ababa which serves as a quiet space for students studying for final exams and doing homework. It is located in one of the city's poorest areas where most families cannot afford to buy textbooks for their children.

An average of 150 students use the library every day with approximately 1,500 enrolled members.

Ethiopia is one of the world's poorest countries with over 20 million people living below the poverty line (UNDAF 2012-2015).

Education is a way out of poverty for many people but according to UNESCO, "Poverty is one of the main barriers to girls' and women's education." Over 60% of adults are illiterate in Ethiopia, particularly women (UNDP 2009).

Many of the students who access the library are thankful for having access to reference books, textbooks and computers that their families can't afford to buy. They are also able to use scientific calculators and technical drawing instruments.

One of the students said, "This library is like home for many students. I have been studying in this library since I was in grade 10. So far, I have got benefits from this library that I couldn't get from any place else."

The library has provided a place where children have access to books, computers and a peer support program aimed at improving study techniques.

Every weekday morning, the library also hosts a Breakfast Club where 40 children from vulnerable families are fed a cooked breakfast. Part of the funding goes towards buying breakfast for attending students who are assessed as most vulnerable.

Bible Study: Matt 26:14-27:66

Matthew's Passion story is different from the other Gospels, and has its own unique stamp. Like the other Gospel writers, Matthew is not so much trying to give a journalistic account of what actually happened, but rather to draw out the meaning of that event for the community of faith: to show who Jesus is, what he has done, and what it means to be his followers.

The details Matthew includes, especially those which differ from the other Gospels, give us clues as to how he understands Jesus' death.

Matthew presents a paradoxical picture throughout the Passion. On the one hand, Jesus is subject to terrible abuse, violence, torture and death from the authorities, both Jewish and Roman. On the other hand, though suffering and tormented, Jesus retains a dignity and majesty that point to his true identity as the Beloved Son, the divinely human King. The cross becomes a kind of enthronement which reveals Jesus' obedience and humility, and his readiness to suffer for the life of the world.

Another significant feature of Matthew's account of Jesus' death is that it is full of apocalyptic images, images that we associate with biblical catastrophic imagery of the end of the world. First, there is the three-hour darkness, then the tearing of the temple curtain, then the earthquake, and finally the strange story of the opening of tombs and the rising to life of dead saints from the past.

In all this, Matthew is trying to show that, in one sense, the end of the world has come upon us in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Of course, it is also still to come, for Matthew, and this Gospel has a vibrant hope in the future Coming of the Son of Man. But still, something definitive has happened on the cross, something fundamental that changed in the world's being. The kingdom of heaven has pushed its way into the human situation, giving definitive promise of God's new world, the promise of a world where violence is ended, and where human beings and creation can live peacefully together in love and harmony. The world is not the same now that Jesus has died and been raised from the dead. God has written in blood — his own blood — the assurance of a new world of peace, reconciliation, love, and justice. This act of violence spells the end of all violence, and the beginning of God's new age of peace.

– *The Rev Prof. Dorothy Lee*
Trinity College, Melbourne

Easter Sunday

Happy Easter! Today we celebrate that death does not have the final say with God; death is transformed by the life of God. Thank you for taking the journey through Lent with ABM. We pray God's blessing upon you as you celebrate resurrection!



A bible given to ABM at the Celebration of the 100 millionth Bible printed by Amity Printing Press (sister organisation of ABM's Partner, The Amity Foundation). © ABM 2012.

A Reflection on Resurrection - Matthew 28. 1-10

Matthew has two stories of Jesus appearing to his disciples in his Gospel. The first takes place in Jerusalem at the empty tomb, and involves two women disciples: Mary Magdalene and another woman named Mary. The second story takes place in Galilee on the mountain where Jesus meets the eleven apostles. In both stories, Matthew's Gospel reaches its majestic climax. Here Jesus is revealed in all his glory, triumphant over evil, violence and death, sending out his church on its mission

The scene involving the two women disciples is a particularly touching one. In Mark's version of this story (which Matthew is following at this point), it is not at all clear whether the women disciples come to faith after they hear the message of the angel. For Mark they flee from the tomb, saying nothing to anyone (Mk 16:8). In Matthew, however, it is lucidly apparent that they do come to full faith and respond in joyful obedience to the commission given them.

Once again, the apocalyptic signs continue, this time with another earthquake, the appearance of an angel and the rolling back of the stone by celestial power. It is not clear whether this is actually the moment of resurrection or not – although Matthew does not describe Jesus actually emerging from the tomb. Instead the women disciples hear the wonderful tidings of the resurrection from the angel, are given the commission to proclaim it, and immediately run to fulfill their task, with joy and gladness.

At this point, the Risen Christ encounters them. There is no actual need for him to appear before them, as they have already heard and believed the message, and are already in the act of obeying it. Yet it is characteristic of Jesus in this Gospel that he gives more than is needed; that he generously gives himself to his disciples in intimacy and love. This is an act of sheer grace for these apostolic women, and they respond with adoration and worship, just as the Wise Men did when they encountered the infant Jesus and his mother at the beginning of the Gospel (Matt 2:11).

For Matthew, this scene points to the presence of Jesus now with his church. But it also promises his future presence at the fulfillment of the ages. For Matthew, the kingdom of heaven is both present and to come. Like the two women disciples, we are summoned to proclaim and to prepare for that Coming in our worship and in our works of love and justice, in obedience to the divine commission.

– *The Rev Prof. Dorothy Lee*
Trinity College, Melbourne