

**ADDRESS - ST MARK'S CHURCH SOUTH HURSTVILLE –
SUNDAY 25 FEBRUARY 2018**

Readings: Gen 17.1-7, 15-16; Romans 4.13-25; Mark 8:31-38.

I very much thank the Rector, for the opportunity to worship with you this morning, and to speak about the Anglican Board of Mission – Australia.

As we gather in this place – in this Church – we acknowledge that we are on the ancestral land of the EORA Nation.

I am glad to be with you this morning. I have pleasant memories of being here on a number of earlier occasions. I particularly remember - maybe it was nearly ten years ago – the occasion when St Mark's hosted the Service for the annual Commemoration of the New Guinea Martyrs.

In thinking of past times, we know our European history in this country is very recent in the time scale of this ancient land.

I understand that two weeks ago you were celebrating a particular 'Hundred Year Anniversary' – the laying of the foundation stone of the first Anglican Church in South Hurstville.

However a milestone that predates your special Anniversary was the meeting in Sydney when the ABM was established. In **1850**, the Church of England in Australia – as it was known in those days – saw a definite need for a dedicated church organization to work for God's Mission in this new country – Australia.

Following the meeting in Sydney of the then only SIX bishops in Australia and New Zealand, **the Australasian Board of Missions** was inaugurated. The charter of this new organization was to further the Gospel of Jesus Christ – in particular to the Aboriginal people of this land; to the peoples of Papua New Guinea (which was then an Australian territory) and to the Solomon Islands and the Islands of the South Pacific as far east as Samoa. That was 168 years ago and 68 years before there was an Anglican Church here in South Hurstville.

You may have spotted a discrepancy in the original name of **ABM**.

It was first known as The Australasian Board of Missions and then it morphed into the **Australian Board of Missions**. It was known as the Australia Board of Missions for over 140 years. However today, and since 1995, it has been the Anglican Board of Mission – Australia. That may seem a small, subtle change to the Name, but it is significant. It emphasises two important aspects of ABM today.

It states that ABM is involved in **MISSION** – Mission with a capital M – not just small **individual missions**. That Victorian era of missions was characterised by the picture of a missionary, wearing a pith helmet going into deepest darkest Africa to convert wild savages to civilised Christians.

MISSION – with a capital M defines ABM today.

I think you will be aware that it has been fashionable for some time now for organizations of all types sizes, whether corporate or voluntary to have '**a Mission Statement**'.

The Anglican Board of Mission – Australia has a Mission Statement -

It's Mission Statement is **MISSION – GOD'S MISSION. Proclaiming the Love of God – known to us through the death and resurrection of Jesus and sustaining us by the Holy Spirit – the Comforter.**

Secondly, ABM is ANGLICAN involved with (partnering) other churches within the world-wide Anglican Communion - the Anglican Family.

We here this morning are part of that world-wide Anglican family.

This Sunday, in Services very similar to this, Anglican congregations around the world will be listening to – the same readings from the Bible. They will be reading in Genesis about that Covenant God made with Abraham. They will be reading Mark's Gospel and hearing the teaching that Jesus was giving to his disciples and to the people, about the high cost involved in following him.

We, as part of the Anglican Communion, are linked to churches in lonely parts of northern Australia; isolated areas of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands; in cities such as Jerusalem, Cairo and Paris; in countries such as England, the USA - the Philippines; in South Korea.

ABM has special Partner relationships with churches in nine different countries.

I'd like to speak briefly about ABM's 2018 Project Book. It is packed full of information about the **31 Projects** being undertaken by ABM in association with Partner Churches – in 9 different countries, including within Australia

13 of these Projects are what can be called specifically '**Gospel Projects**' – as distinct from emergency and development programmes. And Incidentally these Projects are the ones where your donation **does not attract a Tax Deduction**. It usually church people like us who give to these Projects. And **No** we don't give to get a Tax Deduction.

Gospel/Church Ministry Projects: What are they? These are only a few of the thirteen listed in the Project Book: -

- In **Australia** – support for the training of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students at the **Nungalinia** Aboriginal College in Darwin;
- In **Sydney Diocese** – YES. There is the St Andrew's Cathedral **Gawura School** – which enrolls Aboriginal students. This year ABM has pledged \$20,000. This will mean Scholarships to Gawura School can be offered to Aboriginal children from the inner city. (In recent years, ten Gawura students graduated from Year 12 and eight have gone on to tertiary education);
- In **Kenya** – there is the Children's Program titled the 'Catechesis of the Good Shepherd'; In **Myanmar** there is a Project– **Motorbikes for Mission**;
- In **PNG** – there is support for Newton Theological College;
- In **Zambia** – it is support for students at St John's Seminary for Theological Training.

I am stating the obvious, when I say we are in the Season of Lent – the Second Sunday in Lent. It is the time of course, when the church puts before us the challenge of self discipline and self examination. We are encouraged to look at how we are growing in our Love for God and love for our neighbour. We have the example of our Lord Jesus – he fasted and prayed.

Lent has been the traditional time, for Mission Agencies to draw our attention to our neighbour. At this time, ABM, has always made an appeal to church people to support and give to others. This year, ABM has identified 5 particular areas for which it is

requesting support from churches, church organizations and church people, like ourselves. These are set out in the Lent Appeal brochure and on the Lenten envelopes that have gone out to parishes and I believe St Mark's has received them.

During **Lent** this year, there are **three areas** set out for your support. Then there is the special **Good Friday Appeal** and the **Easter Appeal**.

These Appeals are all to support ABM Partner churches in different parts of our Anglican family.

Firstly there is the Church program to support the theological and leadership training of young people in three different countries –

In Papua New Guinea - ABM is sending finance to support Newtown Theological College, Popondotta. (The retired Archbishop of Adelaide, Bishop Jeffrey Driver is working with the Newton College and mentoring their new Principal.)
In the Church in Kenya and the Church in Zambia.

The second envelope is for work in the **Philippines** - there is the programme to help the Episcopal Church of Philippines as it works with small, poor, rural churches. ABM staff worker, *Kate Winney* visited the Mountain Provinces in the north of the Philippines - talking with and giving support to church and community leaders. She heard how they are working to transform the lives of the communities and families with the funds from ABM.

The third envelope is for the **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mission Fund**. Across **Australia**, there are hundreds of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Anglicans responding to the call of God's mission within their local communities. They are proclaiming the love of Christ, baptising and nurturing new believers, responding to cries of the sick and imprisoned, challenging injustice and caring for God's creation - their ancient country. ABM makes grants available to NATSIAC (National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Anglican Council) to support their work.

The Good Friday Offering is celebrating its One Hundredth Anniversary

In 1918, at the end of the First World War the Australian Church through ABM, launched its first Appeal to support the work of the Church and Christians in Jerusalem & the Middle East – the offertories given at Good Friday Services were to be sent to the Jerusalem and Middle East Mission.

This year the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem will use this money for the work it is carrying out at the Princess Basma Centre for Children with Disabilities in Jerusalem

The Easter Offering will support the training of young men at St John's Theological Seminar at Kitwe in Zambia.

In 2018 we live in a different era to the one when those six Australian & New Zealand Bishops met and set up what is now the Anglican Board of Mission – Australia. 2018 is in the age of the global village; of the internet; of i-cloud; of social media. For instance, to know more about ABM and its Partners, go to their Website www.abmission.org There you will find heart-warming stories of what is happening in churches within the Anglican Communion. Also you can become a friend of **ABM on Facebook**.

The **Anglican Board of Missions** sees itself as both a resource centre and as a conduit through which you can find your special Anglican Partners.

There are so many ways in which you and St Mark's can support one of ABM's Projects and/or enter into a Partnership with an ABM Partner Church.

Relationships and Partnerships are essential in our personal lives in our social lives and also in our Church lives

ABM exists to do God's Mission and particularly in that part of God's Vineyard that is the Anglican Communion. We are part of a family. Some parts of this family have greater needs than others – some have greater resources than others.

In this Lent season, when we are struggling with our Lenten discipline, I have in my mind what Jesus said to the disciples and the people: *"If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me"*.

They are strong words for those of us who would follow Jesus. **But Jesus calls it as it is.**

AMEN.