



Lent 2021

A collection of favourite verses
from the congregations of
Bearsted, Burham, Eccles,
Larkfield and West Malling,
Tonbridge Road, and Union Street
Methodist Churches

Compiled and edited by Bonni-Belle Pickard

(Note: Sundays are not included in the 40 days of Lent!
Use the printed materials provided by your church or join
the circuit service online on Sundays.)

Ash Wednesday, 17 February

I command you: be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

Joshua 1:9

This verse helps me through difficult times. It means acting in faith, trusting that God will help me through each day's challenges... including my upcoming operation!

- Britt Marriott, Bearsted

Thursday, 18 February

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.

Matthew 6.33 (RSV)

What does Lent mean to me? It is ideally a disciplined time of reading, study, prayer and fasting before the celebration of Easter. It is a good time to work on aspects of our lives which don't always, maybe even rarely(!) match up to what our reading/study suggests they should be. Chapter 6 of Matthew's gospel is an excellent guide for Lent.

- Mary Rees, Union Street

Friday, 19 February

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:13 (NIV)

I have chosen this verse as HOPE is, in my opinion, what keeps us going and will get us through these still so very uncertain times. Hope is so important during this third lockdown, and beyond. We must not lose hope that the lockdown WILL come to an end and our battle over this virulent pandemic will eventually be won. We must hope that we and our family and friends, and indeed everyone in our country and in other countries, will get vaccinated against coronavirus in due course.

This verse stresses that the vital thing is to TRUST God in all things, for He knows the plans He has for us. We can live in hope, knowing this. He will protect us, but we must also continue taking all safety precautions and staying safe. He is watching over us.

Trusting in God and his promises will give us peace. We will be able to feel God's constant deep joy within us. Our eyes will be opened to notice glimpses of God's glory all around us. We should pray to the Lord, that He will keep us ever joyful, and thank Him for all His blessings He bestows on us.

The verse urges us to keep drawing on the POWER of His Holy Spirit so that we are equipped to face each day. By so doing, we will overflow with hope. Constantly remembering God's promises to us, will help us to feel empowered, joyful and full of deep peace.

- Valerie Thornewell, Larkfield & East Malling

Saturday, 20 February

The Kingdom of God does not come visibly, nor will people say 'here it is' or 'there it is' because the Kingdom of God is within you.

Luke 17:20b-21

Jesus said, 'The Kingdom of God is within you'. We often talk of God's Kingdom coming, and we yearn for it to come quickly. During this pandemic would it not be good to have the disease swept away by the coming of God's Kingdom? When Jesus said that the Kingdom of God is within you, he means we can have the healing, peace, hope, even joy NOW in the midst of our troubles. A line in a recent Stuart Townend song says God's gift to us is today not tomorrow. May God bless our todays and tomorrows, whatever they bring.

- Rod Murr, Burham

Monday, 22 February

*Love is patient; love is kind;
love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude.
It does not insist on its own way;
it is not irritable or resentful;
it does not rejoice in wrongdoing
but rejoices in the truth.
It bears all things, believes all things,
hopes all things, endures all things.
Love never ends.
But as for prophecies, they will come to an end;
as for tongues, they will cease;
as for knowledge, it will come to an end.*

*For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part;
but when the complete comes,
the partial will come to an end.
When I was a child, I spoke like a child,
I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child;
when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways.
For now we see in a mirror, dimly,
but then we will see face to face.
Now I know only in part; then I will know fully,
even as I have been fully known.
And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three;
and the greatest of these is love.*
1 Corinthians 13:4-13

These verses are special to me, Mum, and our family. When we got married at Union Street in March 1987, we had this as a reading, I read this at Dad's funeral in March 1999 again at Union Street and then at my brother's wedding in July 2004. [This reading will also be used today at the funeral of Clare Hughes Farrant who grew up in the Sunday School of Union Street Methodist Church. Our prayers are with her parents, Nick and Ann Hughes, and her family].

- Debbie Fenn and Rachel Taylor, Union Street

Tuesday, 23 February

Now to him who is able to keep you from falling, and to make you stand without blemish on the presence of his glory with rejoicing, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, power, and authority before all time and now and forever.
Jude v.24

One of my favourite books in the Bible is the little book of Jude. It's the last verse (verse 24) is called a Benediction, and I think it says what our faith is all about.

- June Mitchell, Tonbridge Road

Wednesday, 24 February

Very early in the morning when it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went to a solitary place to pray.

Mark 1:35.

At the beginning of the lockdown, I would go for a walk early in the morning between 6-7 a.m. To do this I needed encouragement especially as I often have nights when I do not sleep. The verse I often quote to myself would be this one. Here Jesus' humanity comes over to me, so 'Come follow me' becomes real.

- Valerie Rupp. Bearsted

Thursday, 25 February

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. Joshua 1:9

This verse was brought to my attention during a 72-hour residential Walk to Emmaus held at Aylesford Friary in November 2014. I like the different parts to this verse: We often need strength and courage to face what we have to do. The Holy Spirit can empower us with this strength and courage. We should pray for this each day, and especially before doing something which otherwise

would make us anxious. This is stressed by the following words: “*do not be terrified; do not be discouraged*”; God will be with us in whatever we do. In “normal” pre-pandemic times, my husband and I usually spend several weeks, twice a year, with our son, American daughter-in-law and our three New York State grandchildren. It is so reassuring to say the last words in this verse, to remember God’s promise that He will be with us wherever we go. He will keep us safe on our flights. I also pray this verse before I set off on a car journey, especially if I am driving alone on a motorway.

- Valerie Thornewell, Larkfield & East Malling Methodist Church

Friday, 26 February

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8 38-39

This is a comforting passage in this time of great anxiety and uncertainty, but it’s not always easy to take to heart.

- Anne Murr, Burham

Saturday, 27 February

*Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gets understanding,
For the gain from it is better than gain from silver and its profit better than gold.
She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her.*

Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honour.

Proverbs 3: 13-14

I began reading Proverbs to compare verses with common proverbs which my teenage friends and I used to deliberately misquote, such as ‘He who laughs last didn’t get the joke’. I found many of the Biblical Proverbs very profound and of much more value than our common proverbs. I still enjoy dipping into as a guide for living.

- Jim Bryant, Union Street

Monday, 1 March

In conclusion, my friends, fill your minds with those things that are good and that deserve praise: things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely and honourable. Put into practice what you learned and received from me, both from my words and from my actions. And the God who gives us peace will always be with you.

Philippians 4:8-9

This passage inspired me to compose a song which I sang for all of our children's baptisms. I sang it for some of our grandchildren's baptisms as well. To me it sums up the way I should live my life as a follower of Christ.

- Alfred Pickard, Union Street

Tuesday, 2 March

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.

In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

Proverbs 3:5-6

These verses are special to me because they remind me that God is taking us on a journey deeper into relationship with him as well as guiding us in our daily lives. They remind me to trust in Him for the way forward and not to trust in my own understanding, as God says in Isaiah 55:8-9: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

- Alison Muir, Bearsted

Wednesday, 3 March

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Matthew 28: 18-20 (NIV)

There was a time when my life was very busy. Apart from the need to earn a living there was church, jobs to do at home, a national role in The Boys' Brigade, visits to family around the country as well as holidays, and occasional visits to theatre or Lord's Cricket Ground. A feeling of being overwhelmed was not unusual and with it a desire to stop doing so much. What could go were

those things which I did because I felt they were my calling rather than a necessity.

I remember an occasion when I was waiting for a delayed flight from Dublin to Gatwick late on a Sunday afternoon. I had spent the weekend, with others, presenting a new initiative at Brigade gatherings in Larne, Belfast and Dublin. I was tired and wanted to go home with a chance to relax before a busy week at work. The question which went through my mind on that Sunday afternoon and at times through the week was ‘Why?’.

On the following Sunday these three verses were part of the gospel reading at morning service. They reminded me, not for the first time, why I did what I did.

- John Young, Tonbridge Road

Thursday, 4 March

May your unfailing love be my comfort, according to your promise to your servant.

Psalm 119: 76

In difficult times, we try to gain comfort in many and varied ways, and, at the time of writing, we are surely living in difficult times. We keep trying to think of all sorts of things to make us feel better. I recently found a story of a young child who had lost a favourite toy and was very unhappy about it. His mum suggested he pray about it. The child was much happier the next day, and when Mum asked if he’d found his toy, he replied no, but

after praying about it God showed him he didn't really need it anymore!

During Lent why don't we just open our hearts to God's unfailing love for comfort.

- Mary Rees, Union Street

Friday, 5 March

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.

Joshua 1:9

Whenever I need to make a big decision in life this helps me to remember that taking a leap of faith is not one that I ever have to take alone. It helped me when deciding to move from the East Midlands back home, it helped me to decide to start a new career path in a field I had no experience of and it helped me to take the plunge when I bought into my current business.

- Stefan Carney, Burham

Saturday, 6 March

"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, who you are persecuting," he replied. Acts 9:5

This verse is important to me because the encounter between Jesus and Paul was to have one of the most important consequences on the history of Christianity. Paul was so moved by the divine experience that it inspired him to move away from persecuting Christians to become the greatest champion of Jesus and

Christianity through his Letters. What will inspire us to be a champion for Christ during these difficult times?

- Reg Walters, Union Street

Monday, 8 March

Always be joyful; pray at all times. Be thankful in every circumstance. For this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 2 Thessalonians 5:16-17 (paraphrased)

This verse became known as 'ABJ' (for 'Always Be Joyful') in our house in S India when our children were little. The verse first came to us when we were trying to get paperwork sorted out for guardianship of our youngest child, a very difficult time when we were learning many lessons about what it meant to follow God. Eventually 'ABJ' in our house just meant gratitude, as in: "Eat your soup! That's all we've got today, so enjoy it!" or "ABJ for the third full week of monsoon rain! We'll long for all this water during the dry season!" or "ABJ for a roof over our head and wellington boots on our feet!"

- Bonni-Belle Pickard, circuit superintendent

Tuesday, 9 March

With my whole heart I seek you;

do not let me stray from your commandments.

I treasure your word in my heart,

so that I may not sin against you.

Psalm 119: 10-11(NRSV)

This verse sums up for me that, when I carry Jesus with me, I have help for all I am struggling to deal with everyday life.

- Lin Smith, Union Street

Wednesday, 10 March

May the Lord bless you and keep you.

May the Lord smile down upon you and show you his kindness.

May the Lord answer your prayers and give you peace.

Numbers 4:24-26

This paraphrased version of Numbers 4 is written on the whiteboard where we keep track of the Christmas shoeboxes that we pack up to send around the world.

- Jeanette Abbitt, Tonbridge Road

Thursday, 11 March

*Then I saw an angel standing in the sun,
and with a loud voice he called all the birds
that fly in the midheaven,*

“Come gather for the great supper of God....

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth;

*For the first heaven and the first earth had passed away,
and the sea was no more.*

And I saw the Holy City,

new Jerusalem coming down out of Heaven from God,

Prepared as a bride adorned for her husband;

And I heard a great voice from the throne saying,

“Behold the dwelling place of God is with men’

He will dwell with them and they shall be his people”.

Revelations 19:17, 21:1-3

I am always reminded of Revelations when I listen to the rock band Genesis track 'Suppers Ready'. Many rock records have Biblical references in them. Suppers Ready has a lot of Revelations references in it and finishes as follows:

“There’s an angel standing in the sun,
and he’s crying with a loud voice,
This is the supper of the mighty one,
Lord of Lords, King of Kings,
Has returned to lead his children home,
To take them to the new Jerusalem.”

- Jim Bryant, Union Street

Friday, 12 March

He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.

Revelation 21:4

This passage was read during my father’s funeral. It helps me sometimes to remember that whatever pains or sorrow we might be going through in this life, they are only ever temporary and that we have an eternity of endless love awaiting us.

- Stefan Carney, Burham

Saturday, 13 March

Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds

through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

Philippians 4:6-8 (KJV)

I am a born worrier. I make lists, pack every emergency need when travelling, do puzzles at breakfast to stop thinking about problems in the day ahead. If I can't sleep, "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind" is a very helpful hymn. These are my most helpful bible verses.

- Judy Buckley, Bearsted

Monday, 15 March

Don't worry about anything, but pray about everything. With thankful hearts offer up your prayers and requests to God. Then, because you belong to Christ Jesus, God will bless you with peace that no one can completely understand. And this peace will control the way you think and feel.

Philippians 4:6-7

I find that this summarises one of the statements on a piece of paper pinned to the wall of my new office when I changed rooms. It was a list written by Kenneth Holmes, a Protestant pastor. It says: "Just for today I will be unafraid. Especially, I will not be afraid to enjoy what is beautiful, and believe that, as I give to the world, so the world will give to me."

- Dave Hitch, Union Street

Tuesday, 16 March

Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

Isaiah 41:10

The LORD also will be a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.

Psalms 9:9

These passages speak to me very deeply on a personal level. When I was coming to terms with who I was by nature and what God was calling me to be I had some very difficult decisions to make. These verses remind me that choosing my God over all else was, and always will be, the right decision to make.

- Stefan Carney, Burham

Wednesday, 17 March

*I lift up my eyes to the hills—
from where will my help come?
My help comes from the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.*

*He will not let your foot be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.
He who keeps Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.*

*The LORD is your keeper;
the LORD is your shade at your right hand.
The sun shall not strike you by day,
nor the moon by night.*

*The LORD will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.*

*The LORD will keep
your going out and your coming in
from this time on and for evermore.*

Psalm 121

This was the reading used at Maureen Harris' funeral, held on 17 March 2020, at the beginning of the first lockdown.

Thursday, 18 March

He who abides in Me and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

John 15: 5

During Lent one can try to learn more about “abiding in Me”. I have to admit I find Bible study difficult. However, I was greatly encouraged to read of the well-known American evangelist, Dwight L. Moody who, when asked how, with his fine mind, he could accept the Bible with all its mysteries and contradictions, replied: “I don't explain it. I don't understand it. I don't make anything of it. I simply believe it.” Naïve, maybe, but add prayer, and it is very powerful.

- Mary Rees, Union Street

Friday, 19 March

The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

Psalms 34:18

When I went through a very painful experience as a child, this verse, even though at the time I had not found my faith, brought me great comfort.

- Stefan Carney, Burham

Saturday, 20 March – First day of spring

To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

A time to be born, and a time to die;

a time to plant, and a time to pluck up

that which is planted;

A time to kill, and a time to heal;

a time to break down, and a time to build up;

A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn,

and a time to dance.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-4

A song by The Byrds in 1965 comes to my mind:

“To everything (turn, turn, turn)

There is a season (turn, turn, turn)

And a time to every purpose, under heaven”

When this was released, I was a young an enthusiastic graduate just embarking on my first job a long way from home and the words which are based on Ecclesiastes 3:1-4 (and beyond) were very meaningful to me at the time as I had no idea where my career was going to take me but believed that everything that was to come had a reason and a purpose - as indeed I believe it turned out to be.

- Peter Herrin, Union Street

Monday, 22 March

And after the earthquake a fire: but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still, small voice. 1 Kings 19:12 (KJV)

We live in a world of noise and hurry. This verse (from the KJV because it speaks of “voice” and not “whisper”) requires me to relax, become calm and quiet, emptying my mind of irrelevancies in order to think on things that really matter. Grief and sorrow, remorse and regret are softened, sometimes healed, and put in proportion in the wider scheme of community and life. For me this is one part of prayer, God helping to sort me out, then leaving the last bit to me.

- Margaret Daone, Bearsted

Tuesday, 23 March

Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and look at my hands; then stretch out your hand and put it in my side. Stop your doubting and believe!”

John 20:27

I have chosen this verse because as a child I always felt an affinity with disciple Thomas and his need for proof.

- Jan Hinchliffe, Union Street

Wednesday, 24 March

We know that in all things God works for good with those who love Him, those whom he has called according to his purpose.

Romans 8:28 (GNT)

This verse has got me through quite a few things in my life!

- Daphne Bower, Bearsted

Thursday, 25 March

*The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil; for you are with me;
your rod and your staff— they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
my whole life long.*

Psalm 23 (NRSV)

This reminds me of a simpler time of watching the Vicar of Dibley with my mother! It wasn't until later in life that the words truly spoke to me and now lend me great strength at times when I'm lacking.

- Stefan Carney, Burham

Friday, 26 March

*Praise the Lord all nations!
Extol him, all peoples!
For great is his steadfast love towards us;
And the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.*

Praise the Lord!

Psalm 117

A lovely and simple Psalm, which, when I read it, can leave me feeling a little guilty.

When I 'did' my Wharton Bible study, learning some of the longer Psalms, I sometimes thought, "What's wrong with 117, 133 or 134? they're nice short ones."

- Jim Bryant, Union Street

Saturday, 27 March

Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God. Isaiah 40:1 (KJV)

When I was 15, in school in West Wales, our music teacher decided that the whole school of 400 girls would be involved in a performance of Handel's *Messiah*. Miss Bushell made it clear that a lack of musical talent would not be a barrier to participation. As a result of her perseverance and enthusiasm, I have wonderful memories of a truly uplifting religious and musical experience which has been a source of comfort and joy all my life.

- Joanna Burborough, Bearsted

Monday, 29 March

*The Lord is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?*

*The Lord is the stronghold of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?*

Psalm 27:1

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

John 16:33

These two passages bring to mind powerful imagery of Jesus facing down death and through his resurrection conquering the world. At times of trouble the idea of having such an overwhelmingly powerful ally at my side through thick and thin can make all the difference.

- Stefan Carney, Burham

Tuesday, 30 March

*The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer,
My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge,
My shield and the horn of my salvation,
My stronghold and my refuge,
My saviour; thou savest me from violence.*

David's Song of Deliverance from: 2 Samuel 22:2-3

I found a newspaper cutting between pages in one of my mother's old bibles. When I read the text at those pages, I remembered my mother reciting David's Song of Deliverance to me when I was a boy and I had given her that Bible after I joined the Royal Air Force.

- Jim Bryant, Union Street

Wednesday, 31 March

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
Matthew 6:21.

My treasure is my family and that's where my heart is.

- Christine Cox, Union Street

But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.

Luke 2:19

This verse reminds me of Mary, a young mother with a new baby. I feel so privileged to be a mother, and I feel deeply for those who, for whatever reason, have never had that experience. I love the word 'ponder' in this verse. I have so many great memories of family times, and I sometimes wish I had written more things down. Mary experienced one of the worst losses when Jesus was crucified, and I'm reminded there are many at this time who have lost a son or daughter.

- Eileen Smith, Burham

Thursday, 1 Apr – Maundy Thursday

In you, O LORD, I take refuge;

let me never be put to shame.

In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me;

incline your ear to me and save me.

Be to me a rock of refuge,

a strong fortress, to save me,

for you are my rock and my fortress.

Psalm 71

When I was at medical school at the London Hospital, I attended church on a Sunday evening at St Helens Bishopsgate. My friend Kate used to share readings with me, and this was one that I remember. The time at

medical school and training was hard work, and these verses kept us going.

- Debbie Fenn, Union Street

Friday, 2 Apr – Good Friday

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.

Jeremiah 29:11

Put GOD in charge of your work, then what you've planned will take place.

Proverbs 16:3 (The Message)

These verses are both special as they have spoken to us on different occasions when we have needed reassurance.

- Rebecca and David Kennedy, Burham

Saturday, 3 Apr – Black Saturday

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. John 1:5

It's undeniable that these have been very troubling times for us all. Fear, loneliness and grief have touched all of us. I find the image of the light of the world shining even in the darkest night to be a real comfort to me.

- Stefan Carney, Burham