



*Wymondley Baptist Church*  
Annual Report 2022

Illustration by A. Sibun



# Leadership

The Deacons, JF, CC and I, have met monthly to discuss the planning, fabric and pastoral issues of the Church. At the Annual General Meeting in March 2021 MM was re-elected as Church Secretary for a term of 3 years, in line with the new Church Constitution that was adopted in November 2020. We also held a Full Trustees meeting with MM and JB, our Treasurer, in September 2021.

In 2021 we did not have a theme to cover the year for the Sunday services, instead we followed a series of subjects through the year, each with an associated memory verse. The subjects covered and their memory verses were as follows:

- God's love – John 3 verse 16
- Mark's Gospel – Mark 1 verse 15
- 2 Thessalonians – 2 Thessalonians 3 verse 5
- The Holy Spirit in the life of the church – Acts 2 verse 17
- God is our refuge - Psalm 46 verse 1
- Working for God – 1 Corinthians 15 verse 58
- The path to Jesus – Matthew 1 verses 22 and 23

Thank you to BF and Margaret for helping to prepare the notes with me for these series.

The Chapel building was open for Sunday services every Sunday throughout 2021, despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, although singing was not allowed. The speakers continued to join the services via Zoom for the first part of the year and were shown via projector on the screen in the Chapel. DR was the first person to lead the service and speak from the Chapel on the 18<sup>th</sup> April 2021. All of the services since then have then been led from the Chapel, apart from the 27<sup>th</sup> June when MS shared a pre-recorded message due to needing to be at his own church. We thank God for all our visiting speakers. We transitioned from using recorded music during services to a live musician on 12<sup>th</sup> September, although we have used recorded music on a couple of occasions since then. We give thanks to BF for taking on playing the piano most weeks, although Rebekah, and I also led the music on occasion in 2021. A friend of WA, B, has also played piano when WA has led the service. From the 24<sup>th</sup> July 2021 singing was allowed again in the Chapel building, although we still wear face coverings. The congregation transitioned back to the building, each at their own pace, and now almost everyone who attends services has been to the Chapel on a Sunday morning. In a typical week, 75% of people attend in person with the remainder connecting from home via Zoom.

JF organised the delivery of gifts of flowers to the ladies in the congregation for Mothering Sunday.

From the 26<sup>th</sup> May to the 5<sup>th</sup> June 2021 we took part in Thy Kingdom Come and followed a prayer journal as we prayed for family and friends in the 10 days between Whitsun and Pentecost. Thanks to JF and JC for organising this.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> July we held Church Day by having a picnic in ME's garden. There were a series of short showers whilst we ate, but it was the first time that we were able to meet together in person, outside of a service, since government COVID-19 restrictions had been introduced in March 2020, and we enjoyed being able to chat face-to-face.

For Harvest, gifts for St Mary's Church Little Wymondley's Parish Pantry and Hitchin Foodbank were dropped off at the Chapel on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2021 and the service the following day was led by WA. A picnic Harvest Lunch was shared together in the hall after the service.

The annual Nativity Procession was held this year, after it was unable to take place in 2020.

Rev. Ginni led the procession from the school to St Mary's Church Little Wymondley, via the Chapel and the Bucks Head pub. About a third of the number of people attended compared to previous years, as it was impacted by the rise in COVID-19 cases due to the Omicron variant and the introduction of the government's Plan B. Similarly, it was decided to limit invitations to the Carol Service to close friends and family, due to the situation with COVID-19. As such the attendance at

the service was less than in 2019, although the majority of the congregation were present in the Chapel building.

We continue to seek a part-time leader to support the work of the church and since November we have spent a short time once a month after the Sunday service in prayer, waiting on the Lord for guidance and wisdom. We are encouraged by the pledge of a Home Mission grant from the Central Baptist Association. We have also been encouraged by having another candidate come forward in 2021, although they decided not to move forward with the process. We continue to encourage Church Members to pray that God will bring forward the person He is calling to us.

The Church supports 6 members of the Kingdom Fund, both financially and through prayer.

Finally, many thanks to all those people who have kept in contact with others through phone calls, letters and emails during the year.

*CB*

## Safeguarding

Until August almost all church activities were online.

The DBS checks that were due in 2021 were not completed due to the difficulty in completing ID documentation face to face. DBS for one person was overdue at the end of 2021 but the check has now been completed. However, two people that help with one of the groups still need a DBS check completed and both the DBS checkers are due in 2022.

The proposed Level 1 Safeguarding training was completed at the November church meeting. No other training was due.

There have been no incidents reported this year.

I have also completed a safeguarding self-assessment checklist and only the DBS checks noted above are outstanding.

*JB*

*Designated Person for Safeguarding*

## Prayer

Prayer is a vital part of our church life. During the year we have made adaptations and additions to our times of 'church prayer', hoping to encourage all of our congregation to participate in a way which works for them.

We continue to pray in our homes at 7.30p.m. on Tuesday evenings using the prayer notes which are printed within our fortnightly produced News Sheet and the now monthly compiled Prayer Guide. On the first Tuesday evening of each month, we meet via Zoom to pray specifically for our Kingdom Fund partners, who are being invited individually to join the meeting to share the news and the prayer needs of their ministry.

To enable us to actually pray together 'face to face', we have a short prayer time after the service on the last Sunday of each month to focus on our quest for a Church Leader. A Wymondley Prayer WhatsApp group has just been set up, so we can offer prayer and praise and support each other.

In May we took part in the 'Thy Kingdom Come' prayer outreach, when we distributed material and encouraged over 40 people (as far spread as Norfolk and Grantham) to pray for 5 people they knew to find Jesus as Saviour. What a privilege to take everything to God in prayer.

*JF*

# Secretary

Last year there were no membership changes, so no new ones and nobody left and thankfully there were no deaths. We remind the congregation from time to time about the procedure to apply for Church membership, so with our new regular church attenders, maybe our membership will grow in this next year.

Our Sunday preachers continue to be very regular and helpful as they have followed our series of subjects faithfully and have preached both in the Church and on Zoom whichever has been asked of them. The first time we used the Chapel to lead the service after lockdown was on April 18th, but the Zoom services also continued at the same time. So, our congregation was in Chapel and on line as it is to this day.

Those preaching for the first time in 2021 were as follows:

- Father Tom O'Brien (Churches Together in Hitchin Pulpit Exchange).
- Julia Funnell (Mothering Sunday)
- Emily Croucher (Phase)

The hall was used as a Polling Station on Thursday May 8<sup>th</sup> for the Local Elections. It was also used by the Table Tennis Club from the 6<sup>th</sup> September - to December 6<sup>th</sup> and from January 24<sup>th</sup> 2022 when all the government guidelines were observed.

*MM*

## Baptist Union

In the spring of 2021 we applied for a Baptist Union (BU) Home Mission Grant to help towards funding a leader this year (2022) and we were successful. Should we find a leader for the Church in 2022 then the grant would start. We are currently completing the forms to apply for a grant for 2023.

The Settlement process changed during 2022 and rather than having regional ministers attend a meeting to try to match people and churches there is now a secure area on the BU website that ministers can log into if they are looking to move. Our Church Profile is on the website and ministers will contact us directly if they want to know more.

As part of the new process the format of the profiles were also changed and our profile was updated to the new format in December. The general feel and text of the profile was kept the same, although some of the facts and figures were updated in line with changes over the last 2 years.

Joanna and CC attended parts of the online Central Baptist Association (CBA) Assembly this year. It was a useful and enjoyable meeting.

*JB*

## Churches Together in Hitchin

The regular Churches Together in Hitchin council meetings were held on Zoom until September when they returned to being in person. Churches Together continue to support joint initiatives across Hitchin, including the work of Phase, Hitchin Foodbank, and recently the new Hitchin Pantry venture.

Also, the ministers/leaders group met once at lunch time via Zoom at the start of 2021 and then in October for breakfast and prayer. I have attended these meetings to represent the Church. Father Tom O'Brien has taken over from Jane Robson as chair of Churches Together for 2022.

As mentioned in last year's annual report Father Tom from Our Lady's Catholic Church preached at our Sunday service via Zoom for the annual pulpit exchange in January 2021.

It was not possible to hold the annual Good Friday walk of witness due to the COVID-19 restrictions. The 'Party in the Square' was postponed from Pentecost and was held on the 12<sup>th</sup> September 2021 when there was music, stalls and a barbecue.

I thank GC who has been our primary contact with Churches Together since we have been members. In the last year he has been unable to participate as he has in the past and we need a volunteer who will attend Churches Together council meetings to keep us abreast of what is happening.

*CB*

# Outreach

## It's Monday

After the pandemic restrictions had been relaxed, the 'It's Monday' Club restarted on September 6<sup>th</sup> after a break of 18 months. when all the Government guidelines were carried out. Numbers had been affected by illness but all who attended were so very glad to be meeting again. I am so thankful to have stalwarts (but not church members) GP and BP as regular helpers and JM (my son) has been a great help too. We celebrated our 20<sup>th</sup> birthday in January and look forward to our future programme. We are glad to have three new members, one of whom is BA, who is also a regular Church attender too. This is a weekly Church Outreach Group and we are encouraged when members invite and bring friends.

### Accounts

Funds held in the Church Account at 4/3/21	£298.27
Amount withdrawn on 27/9/21 (for ongoing expenses)	<u>£ 70.00</u>
Balance held in Church Account on 27/9/21	<u>£228.27</u>
Gift to Church on 21/1/22	<u>£100.00</u>
	<u>£128.27</u>
Table money (held in Church Account)	<u>£ 16.47</u>
Amount held in Church accounts at 9/2/22	<u>£144.74</u>
Income since September 2021	£193.22
Expenses	<u>£113.54</u>
Money held for weekly expenses at 9/2/22	<u>£79.68</u>

## Oasis

During Lockdown in 2021 we had Zoom Oasis meetings with speakers in May and June, and in July we met at Margaret Edmond's home for our summer gathering. After some prayer and discussion during the August break it was decided to move the Oasis monthly meeting, which had for many years been held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday afternoon, to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday Morning. So as from 20<sup>th</sup> September 2021, It's Monday has had an Oasis type devotional meeting once a month and is joined by those who attended the Wednesday Oasis. So far, this has gone well and it is encouraging to have the extra numbers on the third Monday. So, Oasis is now part of 'It's Monday' and we are thankful that even though the day has changed, the numbers have kept up. The £13.99 Oasis money reported last year was used towards speaker expenses.

MM

## Men's Group

No activities have taken place in the last year due to the on-going COVID-19 pandemic. TC has sent out occasional messages to encourage the group and to ask about the possibility of getting together again. GC has said that he is unable to lead this group and so a Church member is needed to work with TC, if this group is to restart. Your prayers would be really appreciated. The Balance of £54.45 from 2020 was donated to Phase and the church general fund, no funds are now held by the group.

## Messy Church

We had just one Messy Church in 2021, when we had a treasure hunt around the village in August. Unfortunately, only one family were able to attend but they had a good time and BF, JF, JB and CB shared a picnic with them in one of the farm's fields, as they learned about the treasure that God has waiting for us in Heaven.

Currently there are no plans for Messy Church in 2022. We would like to do at least one event however we need to work out how to keep people safe and have fun in the hall, as well as the best time of year for it to be. Various emails have been sent throughout the year to the families we have contact with and an Easter craft pack was delivered to each house, but there has been very little response from the families.

*JB*

## First Tuesday Coffee & Chat

Owing to Covid restrictions at the beginning of the Church year our First Tuesday meetings were all on Zoom. What would we all have done without Zoom? Some of us went on-line and had good chats with WA & LA. Will even came on when he was shielding before or after his treatment.

Since September we have been having our gatherings in the 'Rump and Wade' which is in the Cromwell Hotel, Stevenage. I can recommend their coffee and also the hot chocolate. Unfortunately, I have not been able to get to the meetings every month. Numbers vary from about 6 to 15 or 16. We have been delighted to welcome BA and K & W -to the gatherings. RO and TO are regular folk as well

Although WA doesn't usually bring a topic for discussion these days, sometimes one of us will bring in something we have heard or read about, and some of us go on to have a small debate. The seating arrangements are not as good as the Orange Tree when it comes to a discussion.

Everyone is welcome to join us on the First Tuesday in the month. (I will try to remember to put dates in the News Sheet for you)

*CC*



# Teaching

## House Groups

### Friday Morning

Our House Group still meets at 11.00 a.m. on alternate Friday mornings during term times. Using the Zoom facility suits us well, due to mobility and other issues, not least, that IH and CH live away from the area. We now number 11 members, since we welcomed DF into our group a couple of months ago. We always start with a chat while most of us drink our coffee or tea.

BF leads our study group, with different members always willing to help out with the readings and participate in the question and answer times. We have used some Penelope Wilcox studies alongside other relevant study material, covering a wide variety of subjects such as perseverance, aridity (dryness), eyes wide open, and also various character studies. Our hope is that our time spent reading God's word and talking about the content will lead us to see how we might apply what we have learnt into our own lives.

Unfortunately, S can no longer participate, but we pray with her and she knows we pray for her. We also ensure her own church pastoral care team know how to stay in contact with her.

We always conclude our gathering with a time of prayer, sometimes for each other, but mostly for other folk we know, or situations we are aware of, which we place in the Lord's care. It is a pleasure to head up this group who come from 4 different churches worshipping the One True God

*JF and BF*

### Wednesday Evening

The Wednesday evening Bible Study group was meeting using Zoom during 2021. We started the year with looking at the theme of love. We then followed a series of studies by Selwyn Hughes on worship, considering the different ways we worship God and how it changes because of the different situations that we live through.

It was decided not to restart the group after the summer break as numbers had got very low, which did not allow for a good discussion. The core group of members gathered at DF's home in December to share mince pies, hot drinks and a chat.

There are currently no plans to restart the group.

*CB*

## Bible Explorers

Sending weekly "lessons" to our youngsters has been difficult as it is so much harder for them when it's not 'face to face' and especially when they were doing on-line school lessons too.

At the Deacons suggestion SC, CB and JC have been preparing one lesson each month. This means we have kept in touch with them. It is good to see them at church sometimes and see them developing into fine young people. Let's remember them in our prayers as they navigate adolescence, peer pressure, Covid issues and walking with the Lord.

*JC*

# Fabric

The church building was open for services every week during 2021, however to begin with this was to be able to watch the Zoom service only. Since the summer the speakers and more congregation have returned to the church and Zoom is now kept for those who are unable to attend in person. This has proved to be a useful addition.

Early in the year the main doors to the hall were replaced with uPVC doors, this has made it easier for wheelchairs and stopped a lot of drafts. An additional two heaters were added in the church in the spring and timers have been added to all the heaters so we can now set them to come on ready for when they are needed. The heaters also have thermostats and reach temperature but unfortunately the room does not keep the heat for any length of time.

In the summer the hall was painted to ensure that the wooden structure lasts many more years and the gate on the patio was replaced. A light was added to the fire exit from the hall onto the patio in case the fire exit is needed at night. The external light above the kitchen steps has been replaced and the curtain rail to the vestry has been repaired.

The church and hall windows need repainting and it was decided to defer this to 2022 if we have the funds. Some of the windows also need repair.

*JB*

# Finance

The summary of the accounts is shown in Appendix 1, these are being checked by the Independent Examiner.

This year has again been a bit different in terms of the way gifts have been received and payments made by the Church. Gifts to speakers have continued to be by bank transfer where possible and most speakers have welcomed this. All bills are paid online. A large proportion of giving is now online and if anyone would like to do this, please contact me so we can get it set up, either for one off or regular giving. I am also grateful that our Independent Examiner agreed to continue this year.

At the end of 2021 the Church Funds were as follows:

Church General Fund: £6556

Kingdom Fund: £450

Leader Fund: £59833

The Kingdom Fund target of £4000 was met which allowed us to send £750 to AP, PHASE, WA and AB and £500 to LM and HA. They are all very grateful for the contributions.

Additional payments were made to Tearfund, Word for the World, CAP and Good News for Everyone (formally GideonsUK) as various speakers visited us. The excess at the end of the year compared to budget (£450) has been moved to the Leader Fund as per the 2019 AGM.

It should be noted that due to the church and hall being closed for much of the year the donations for use of the hall are down on previous years. Although the Men's Group and the local council (May 2021 election) did make contributions. Water and electricity payments are also down as so little has been used. The electricity is paid by Direct Debit and we have benefitted from the over payments made in 2020 allowing the 2021 payments to be minimal. I have now increased the payments for 2022 to cover the actual usage.

In 2021 we replaced the doors on the hall (£1524) and painted the outside of the hall (£602) as well as adding two more heaters to the church (£780). These larger expenses are not included in the average expenses listed below.

Monthly averages (including Gift Aid claims):

		2021	2020	2019
General Fund	Income	£761	£921	£889
	Expenses	£688	£834	£992
Leader Fund	Income	£603	£778	£910 + £10000 *
	Expenses	£0	£0	£0

\* One off donation

Thank you to everyone who contributes financially to the work of the Church.

If you contribute and pay tax but have not completed a Gift Aid form, please let me know and I can send you a form so we can claim an extra 25% on your gift. If you have previously signed a Gift Aid form and your tax situation changes, please let me know so I can keep the records up to date.

*JB*