



*Wymondley Baptist Church*  
Annual Report 2021

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Note that names in this report have been redacted as they are considered personal information as part of our Data Privacy policy.

## Leadership

The Deacons have met monthly to discuss the planning, fabric and pastoral issues of the Church. It was agreed by the Church members that JB would take on the role of Treasurer and CC handed over the reins in May 2020. We give thanks to CC for all the years that she has served as our treasurer.

The theme for 2020 was "God the Holy Spirit". The series started by looking at Jesus' ministry in Matthew's gospel and particularly how the Holy Spirit led Him. We also had series on Sunday mornings on 'Belonging', The restoration of the people of Israel in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, and a series on 1 Thessalonians. The year culminated with a series looking at the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, followed by looking at the second coming of Jesus during Advent. Thank you to BF and ME for helping to prepare the notes with me for these series.

From Sunday 22 March 2020 services were held on Zoom due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the related government restrictions on places of worship. We thank God that all our visiting speakers have been able to join us from their homes on Zoom and for the music that has enabled us to enjoy songs and hymns in our homes. The Chapel building was re-opened on 6 December 2020 for people to watch the Zoom service, after the second COVID-19 lockdown in England. The building has remained open since, although the vast majority of people continue to connect to services from home.

Gifts of flowers were delivered to the ladies in the congregation for Mothering Sunday and cookies to the men for Fathers' Day. JB also delivered sweets to people for the commemoration of 75 years since VE Day.

From 21<sup>st</sup> May to 30<sup>th</sup> May 2020 we took part in Thy Kingdom Come and had a prayer email to help us to pray for family and friends in the village for the 10 days between Whitsun and Pentecost. The email also included pictures from around the villages to prompt our prayers.

For Harvest, gifts for Hitchin Foodbank were dropped off at the Chapel at a social distance on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2020 and a photograph was shown at the start of the Zoom service the following day of the display of gifts. A Zoom Harvest Lunch was also shared together.

The annual Nativity Procession was not able to be held this year due to the COVID-19 restrictions. A Nativity Trail was jointly planned with Rev. GD. People were able to pick up a goody bag from either St Mary's, Little Wymondley or the Chapel and then follow the map around Little Wymondley to complete the nativity story. Despite households not being allowed to mix, 60 goody bags were collected, and positive feedback was received from people in the village. We look forward to being able to work together as churches when the COVID-19 restrictions allow.

We continue to seek a part-time leader to support the work of the church and we were encouraged by the pledge of a Home Mission grant from the Central Baptist Association again this year. We also were encouraged by having a candidate come forward, although they decided to take up another position. We continue to encourage church members to pray that God will bring forward the person He is calling to us.

The Church also continues to support 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. This has helped people to remain connected with the Church even if they have not been able to connect to the Zoom services during the COVID-19 restrictions.

*CB*

## Safeguarding

Due to the changes in meeting remotely this year and the difficulty in accessing training etc, not a lot has happened. One person is overdue for an updated DBS check and two people that help with one of the groups need a DBS check completed. We hope to be able to complete this in 2021 once it is easier to check ID documentation face to face.

No Safeguarding training was required to be completed this year and the proposed Level 1 training for 2020 did not happen due to the difficulty in presenting remotely.

Updates proposed to the Church Meeting for the Safeguarding procedure in 2020 required further consideration and due to the lockdown were not considered so urgent. A revised proposal will be presented to the next Church Meeting.

There have been no incidents reported this year.

*JB*

*Designated Person for Safeguarding*

## Prayer

Since March 2020 when the first COVID lockdown was introduced, we have been unable to meet in DF's home at 7:30p.m. on Tuesday evenings for a Church Prayer Time. However, since the end of March, we have been praying together but at a distance, within the safety of our own homes. To help us 'keep on track' we have been circulating electronically, once a fortnight, a Prayer Guide to our church members with email facilities, and 2 others. Additionally, CC has been including a shorter prayer guide in the revamped News Sheet which she produces on alternate weeks. It has been a privilege to bring our thanks and praise to God for his goodness to us and to pray for the many needs of our Kingdom Fund partners, our own Church family, and on behalf of many other people and situations close to home and throughout the world.

*JF*

# Secretary

Our membership sadly lost two of its members last year through the deaths of CD and IR. There were no applications for membership and so no new members have been received in.

Our Sunday preachers have been very helpful as they have all fitted in with the Zoom method of leading services.

There have been three people preaching for us for the first time.

*MM*

## Baptist Union

In the spring of 2020 we applied for a Baptist Union (BU) Home Mission Grant to help towards funding a leader this year (2021) and we were successful. Should we find a leader for the Church in 2021 then the grant would start. We are currently completing the forms to apply for a grant for 2022.

Our Church Profile continues to be presented at BU settlement meetings to see if a match can be found with a possible leader.

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

## Churches Together in Hitchin

While there have been very few formal face to face meetings since last March, many Churches Together in Hitchin (CTIH) activities have continued as the churches have continued to serve their congregations and the wider town throughout the pandemic. Examples include support for –

- PHASE
- Feed Up - Warm Up and Foodbank
- Helping Herts Homeless

With our various lockdowns, Street Angels has been suspended.

Using Zoom has allowed the quarterly Council meetings to take place, also the ministers/leaders group every 6-8 weeks. January's pulpit exchange also happened, when Father TO from the Catholic Church preached at our Sunday service (and the preachers did not even need to travel to their host church!)

'Carols in the Marketplace' did not take place, because of Covid, but the Churches contributed financially to an imaginative alternative - a big screen in the Market Place - where a 30 minute video programme ran for several hours on a loop, including carols sung by various of our churches, contributions from some schools and short meditations by various of our Church leaders. The sudden imposition of lockdown meant that, sadly, it only ran for one day instead of two.

We should give special thanks to the following people:

- The minister of Tilehouse Street Baptist, who had been chair through a challenging year
- JR, our impressive secretary for many years
- LS and DS, who coordinate all the CTIH announcements alongside their ministerial duties
- GG who produces the quarterly CTIH prayer link

During the year, a new minister has been appointed at St Mark's Church in place of JM who is now part of the St Alban's Cathedral team. He grew up in Hitchin so already knows his way around well.

Despite Covid, PJ has started planning for this year's Pentecost 'Party in the Square' on 23rd May. More information to follow.

The next CTIH Council meeting where recent activity and future plans will be shared is, as usual, open to everyone and even easier to attend with Zoom! It is on the 18th May. Connection details will be circulated.

I am very grateful that CB has been able to attend the ministers/leaders meeting this year since I felt unable to take part, whether by attendance at meetings or by Zoom. I do miss participating in these encouraging meetings but it's helpful that we're represented by someone involved in the leadership of our Church

GC

# Outreach

## Oasis

The last Oasis meeting was held on February 19<sup>th</sup>, and because of the Covid-19 virus first lockdown the March meeting was cancelled and due to the restrictions which followed through the year no meetings were held. However, I was able to keep in touch regularly with attendees by phone or e-mail and to deliver Bible study notes. I am thinking about arranging a meeting on Zoom after I've chatted to those who normally attend. Our income stayed the same as it was at the end of 2020 which is £13.99

*MM*

## It's Monday

The last 'It's Monday ' meeting was held on Monday the 9<sup>th</sup> March with a visit to Little Almshoe, where members had an enjoyable time making bread. In the 18 years since this weekly meeting started, this was the first time we could no longer meet in the hall each Monday, because of the coronavirus restrictions. Thankfully I have been able to keep in touch regularly with members by phone and e-mail and have seen some in person when it was safe to do so. Bible study notes and other magazines, as well as birthday cards etc., have been delivered and B and G, who help me have dropped things into homes too.

We are very thankful that B and G are recovering well from Covid-19. It was also good that five of our members contributed articles with memories for the Christmas News Sheet.

We started the year with £383.27 and have paid out £60 to the Link to Hope Shoebox Appeal and £25 to the Daily Bread Ministries. So our present balance is £298.27. Our table of course has not been operating so we hope to pass on gifts to other organizations when we re start.

*MM*

## Men's Group

There are currently twenty-seven men on our circulation list most of whom we are connected with by email, one by WhatsApp and a couple by post. A few are Church Members or take part in other Church-based activities.

I am very grateful to TC who carries out most of the admin with a bit of support from me. Since the 1<sup>st</sup> March none of our programmed events have taken place and our only 'activities' have been occasional messages either with greetings and good wishes or with information about events which have happened at Church, via Zoom or otherwise (Christmas trail, etc). The latest has invited everyone to participate in our planned February Church Zoom Quiz evening.

We get a few responses to each communication and when we have met people while out and about, we appreciate that we are part of a really friendly group.

We're aiming to encourage the group to keep going once Covid restrictions allow. We will all be eighteen months older than when we last met, which may have implications for some, particularly if participating in visits. Tom and I realised at the start of 2020 that, as organisers, we have to take

seriously our responsibility during activities for the well-being of the people who join in with those activities.

We don't have a charge for attending meetings but people usually contribute to the costs of hot drinks at our winter meetings and a statement accounts for those is below.

A big vote of thanks to Tom and a reminder that your prayers and support for us all are really appreciated.

GC

## Accounts

Date	Meeting	Speaker	Money in	Money out	Attendance
c/f			£ 5.00		
22/03/2018	Railways DVDs	GC	£ 7.00		
20/09/2018	Severn and Oresund Bridges	MH	£ 17.60		17
28/02/2019	Railway DVD and AGM	GC	£ 9.00		9
12/04/2019	Gift to Henlow Museum			£ 30.00	
17/10/2019	RAF film	MF	£ 11.50		10
20/11/2019	Ugandan Birds	MH	£ 7.00		9
11/12/2019	Air Ambulance	JH	£ 12.35		23
16/01/2020	Railways DVD	TC	£ 6.50		11
20/02/2020	Missionary Aviation Fellowship	DF	£ 8.50		10
		Total	£ 84.45	£ 30.00	
		Balance	£ <u>54.45</u> c/f as cash		

## Messy Church

Messy Church in March occurred just a week before we went into the first lockdown. We celebrated 10 years of Messy Church with 32 people looking at the miracle of Jesus turning water into wine. There were several new families and it was a good afternoon which we finished with packed lunches and cake.

In June we attempted an online Messy Church with children having a pack of materials to make the crafts and then gathering on Zoom for the talk. Three families attended and it was quite hard work as the younger children do not seem to like online gatherings, however feedback indicated it was well received by those who attended. At the end of September, we attempted a Messy Church treasure hunt. However only 2 families signed up and one was then ill so the event was cancelled. The treasure hunt will be saved for later this year when people are allowed to mix and wanting to get out again.

Currently there are no plans for Messy Church in 2021, however once we see how we are able to move out of restrictions we will try to plan in a couple of events.

JB

## Orange Tuesday / First Tuesday Coffee & Chat

There seem to be various names for this group, but somehow Orange Tuesday doesn't seem quite right for this year's summary. The group have 'met' on Zoom for the past few months. We had a month off due to WA & LA's 'holiday' and, on one occasion we were going to meet up in Baldock and take our own chairs and get a coffee locally and sit, 'socially distanced' on the green in the High

Street. However, it rained that day and then we were thrown back into lockdown and it became too cold to meet like that.

Almost all the meetings this year have been just a chance to catch up with each other but we did have one more organised morning in December.

Zoom has been very good for us, despite the fact that we would all like to meet up face to face, as some like AF & MF have been able to join in. Following my note in the January 3<sup>rd</sup> News Sheet reminding everyone about First Tuesday, JW joined us and she was with us again in February. It was great to have her with us.

Our February meeting was the day before WA's first Radio Therapy session. We are so thankful that the group continues to meet and thank WA and LA. Members of the Church and others from the congregation and other Churches enjoy meeting up together. At the February meeting there were about 16 of us, including WA and LA.

CC

# Teaching

## House Groups

### Friday Morning

This group became part of the CTiH Lent Group from 28th February to March 13th 2020.

We were fortunate to be able to lead three Lent meetings before lockdown, two in our home and one at another member's house. The Lent Group included one person from Walsworth Road Baptist Church and another from the Roman Catholic Church in Hitchin.

We resumed our fortnightly House Group on alternate Friday mornings at 11.00. via Zoom, on the 5<sup>th</sup> June to see how it went, and apart from rather long breaks in the Summer and for Christmas, we are still going strong. We always start with a catch up and a DIY cup of drink and end with an open time of prayer. Our studies in the main have been based around John's Gospel.

Unfortunately S, one of our neighbours has no I.T. facility and cannot join in, but she receives regular phone calls and gets notes on the study popped through the door if she wants them. CH and IH have rejoined the Group from Berkhamstead. The group started again on 29th January 2021 when we will be using a study book looking at conversion.

We have been maintaining regular telephone contact with group members and more widely within our church family. Additionally, keeping within the then current restrictions, we have invited a few folk into our garden for a socially distanced coffee and have made impromptu phone calls from outside folk's homes so they could stand at their front door and have a long distance chat with us. Thanks to CB for helping us access the wonders of Zoom.

*JF and BF*

### Wednesday Evening

The Wednesday evening Bible Study group was meeting at DF's home when the first lockdown was introduced. We restarted on the 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2020 using Zoom and were joined with a few additional people who were unable to access their usual groups.

We studied some characteristics of Christian life up to the summer and then from September the time was used to run a Christianity Explored course. Participants watched the videos on-line in advance of the meeting and we then followed the course material, and answered the questions as a group on Zoom. We had a virtual away day one Saturday, where we shared our lunch on Zoom between 2 further Bible studies. Whilst all those who attended the course were already Christians, it was useful to follow the material and I hope that some newer Christians or enquirers will want to follow the course in the not too distant future. My thanks to BF and JF, who helped lead some of the sessions.

We resumed the normal Bible Study group for Advent and have started this year with looking at the theme of Love.

*CB*

## Bible Explorers

Bible Explorers has moved to being on email since the first lockdown. Bible readings and internet links are shared, along with ideas for activities that can be completed at home and some teaching points or questions.

During the first lockdown we looked at Old Testament stories, starting with creation and then moving chronologically forward. Activity ideas included making the walls of Jericho out of cushions and finding objects for all the colours of the rainbow. SC and JC have helped prepare materials since the autumn.

Feedback is sporadic, but occasionally MN has sent an update via email and it has been good when the children have joined the Sunday services on Zoom, particularly in recent weeks.

*CB*

# Fabric

The church doors were locked in mid-March due to the Covid lockdown. The church and hall have been checked for issues every week while the buildings have been closed. We continued to pay the cleaner although we did not ask her to work until we had understood the rules and were starting to think about how to open the church building. Following the completion of a risk assessment, cleaning started again in September and has continued with a stop for the November lockdown. The church re-opened to show the Zoom service at the beginning of December and cleaning has continued since then.

During the summer the two side wall heaters in the church were replaced with low level heaters with thermostats and timers. Following trials of the new heaters during December it has been decided to add two more of the same type of heaters so that the floor standing heaters are no longer required. A quote for the work has been requested from the electrician. Two taps in the kitchen were also replaced during the summer to stop leaks.

During January we have received quotes for replacing the hall double doors with uPVC doors and an order has been placed so we hope this will be completed in March.

*JB*

# Finance

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

During May the treasurer changed from CC to JB as agreed at the 2020 AGM. We are very grateful for all that CC has done over the many years of looking after the finances. There have been some changes in the way that the accounts are managed, some due to different people doing the finances and some due to the restrictions imposed on face to face meetings in 2020. Most of the bank payments are now electronic and much of the giving has been either by cheque or online this year. We are also working with a new Independent Examiner.

At the end of 2020 the church funds were as follows:

Church General Fund: £7915.50

Kingdom Fund: £276.73

Leader Fund: £51862.14

The Kingdom fund target of £4000 was met which allowed us to send £700 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 London City Mission, Tearfund, Word for the World and Good News for Everyone (formally GideonsUK) as various speakers visited us. An additional £50 was given compared to the budget, however this was able to be given due to the giving being over budget. The excess at the end of the year compared to budget (£276.73) 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 all the groups and the local council (November 2019 election) had made contributions during January and February. However, water payments are also down as so little has been used. The electricity is paid by Direct Debit and has continued to be paid at the pre-lockdown levels, until the electricity company has been able to reduce the payments. This means that we have credit with the company which we will be able to use in 2021.

Monthly averages (including Gift Aid claims):

	2020 Income	2019 Income	2020 Expenses	2019 Expenses
General Fund	£921	£889	£834	£992
Leader Fund	£778	£910 + £10000 one off donation	£0	£0

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*