

2021 has been another very challenging year for our church due to the corona Virus pandemic. The church was closed from the 27th December, 2020 and reopened on the 14th March, 2021.under strict government guidelines, risk assessed, social distancing, no singing and use of organ, which continued for much of this year. However, due to the loyalty of our church members, many of which fall into the vulnerable category we did manage to hold regular services and officiated at 4 funerals and 2 baptism's made extremely difficult due to covid restrictions, unfortunately the 1 wedding booked was postponed unto 2022. Our Minister Joy Leathers was unfortunately off sick due to ill health over this early period and we relied mostly on our Deacon Led 'do it yourself services. Special thanks go to Barbara who is training to be a lay preacher and other members of the congregation who led our services .Our aim to provide a service for members and any other worshippers who might like to attend was achieved under very difficult circumstances and restrictions. The average weekly attendance over the year was 10 plus. We do endeavour to join in any community events, but unfortunately these were limited this year, we did however, manage to hold a socially distanced remembrance service this year and joined with Holy Trinity Church at their Christmas Eve service..

Unfortunately our Minister Joy leathers resigned her post in May 2021 retiring due to ill health, which left us with yet another problem providing worship in our church, we are actively seeking a replacement and advertising through the Congregational Federation facilities, as of yet we have had little success, During this interregnum period we are managing to invite visiting preachers and again using our own congregation to hold our services

Church Events:

Until the latter part of the year gatherings were under government restrictions and our first village event was held in September when the Oakamoor Village got together to hold a fun day, our church participated in this and we held a special exhibition in the church of art and craft work, the whole event was very well attended and enjoyed, this was not a money raising event, just a celebration of the lifting of restrictions and the village celebrating

We held our annual Harvest Festival service, but decided not to hold our annual Harvest supper. We held our Annual Christmas Candlelight service which under the circumstances was very well attended, many thanks as always to John for setting up the candles and making a beautiful setting for this service, We all went out for a Christmas meal together at the Queen's Arms, Freehay, this was a very pleasant, and enabled us to enjoy each other's company on a social level which had been denied us over most of the year.

Charity Giving:

Our charity giving this year was carried out in a limited way due to the pandemic, but we did manage to support the Saltbox Charity who work in the Staffordshire area offering support to people in need, they also advertised our vacancy for a minister free of charge, this money was raised from our Harvest Festival instead of giving goods, we gave money. The Salvation Army was well supported due to one visiting preacher who came quite regularly, we also gave to the Longton Salvation Army at Christmas who we usually support at our annual gift service, which is given to disadvantaged children and their families in the Staffordshire area.

Property Reports:

Church: We are always aware that our church is Grade 2 listed and was opened in 1878, whenever we have to restore or repair any features we try to be as discreet as possible. This year our local stonemason has been very busy and has done extensive work to the bell tower, the hugh bell needed stabilising and much pointing and rendering had to be done. We are very lucky to have found this highly skilled individual to do the work on our church, more outside work needs doing, and this will be completed in stages when the stone mason is free. The designated area for extension to the church yard has been finalised and ready for use when the existing church yard is full.

The organ is tuned annually, and unfortunately this time around needed intensive work doing on it, another valuable asset to our church, which cannot be allowed to deteriorate, the organ tuner completed this intricate work and

the difference to the sound is incredible. The annual alarm system and fire extinguishers and safety checks were completed. We thank John Jarvis for keeping the church clean and tidy on a weekly basis particularly over this difficult year when cleanliness and hygiene has been of paramount importance, and for doing many voluntary jobs to help the church.

School Room:

Our school room which of course has not been used regularly due to restrictions was falling into disrepair and the congregation of the church asked if it could be decorated before we started using it again. Unfortunately when the decorator was able to find time to do this job, when he assessed for costing he discovered that a considerable amount of the building had dry rot, this then became an urgent job, the kitchen units were rotten and the walls had to be lined and deep gullies dug out around the building, as a certain amount is below ground level, This job has now been completed damp proofed and new kitchen units insitu, and ready to be used again.

Manse and Bluebell Cottage:

The tenant in Bluebell Cottage gave notice, and vacated the cottage in January, 2021, the resetting of the property was put in the hand of Keates & Son of Cheadle, all safety electrical and gas checks were completed and new tenants went into the property, we count ourselves very lucky as these tenants are supporters of our church and work tirelessly for us. The solar panels on the roof of each cottage are generating power which provides help to defray the cost of electricity used in the church.

All regulatory checks on boilers and electrics have been undertaken along with any incidental work that needs attention over the year

Grounds: The grounds around the property are kept in excellent condition by our groundsmen, Norman and John. All buildings and the approach drive are included in their work. We thank Norman and John for the conscientious work throughout the year, as our church is in a conservation area, John consults with them regarding any work that needs to be done with felling of branches etc, so we comply with the current legislation regarding our grounds.

Dorothy Clowes (Sec) March 2022

Memorial Free Church Expenses 2021 (Trustees a/c.)		
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TREASURER		
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Chimney sweep Bluebell	
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40.00

J.Jervis (cleaning)	
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130.00

N.Edwards (graveyard)	
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90.00

Christmas Lunch (drinks)	
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23.40

Total (J.Redfearn)	
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283.40

Work in graveyard/Schoolroom	
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205.00

Fence at Bluebell	
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90.00

Limestone/stone top car park	
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153.70

stone Manse/Bluebell (parking)	
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138.30

fencing off Allen garden	
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260.50

Total (J.Redfearn)	
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847.50

VISITING MINISTERS	
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R.Pilsel	
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50.00

C.Chadwick to Sal.Army	
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50.00

C.Chadwick	
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100.00

I.Payne	
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90.00

Total	
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290.00

The Memorial Free Church , Oakamoor accounts were audited by Judy Ford FCCA on 7th October 2021 and were found to be a correct record of the financial affairs.