

Before lockdown, St John's were already very active on social media. Like many churches, they would say there's still been so much to learn.

Geraint Harries, who runs the village church's social media accounts, shares the five things they've learnt about digital communication, adaptors and village life.

# Five practical lessons learnt since lockdown

## 1. Install infrastructure before you need it

A year ago we set up [Office 365](#) for our Church and migrated all our email management to [MailChimp](#). At the time, this seemed a lot of effort for little reward as visibly nothing changed. However, since lockdown, video conferencing, OneDrive, and the Office Suite have become core tools for us to effectively communicate within our team and congregation. With the technology already there, it meant we were able to quickly adapt to online communication.

Our mailing list has been particularly crucial. Spending that time checking all the GDPR boxes and getting everyone's contact details in one place securely, has paid off massively in lockdown.

Right now, we are installing cables that we don't currently need in anticipation of expanding our worship. At the time of writing, we're unable to share in collective sung worship, however we are none-the-less laying down cabling to support the live streaming of musicians. This will mean when public singing is allowed again, we'll just need to plug in the instruments.

### Consider:

- What things do you anticipate your church may need in the future?
- What could you do today to better equip you for that?



## 2. Make it as simple as possible for everyone

Throughout lockdown we've tried different platforms to upload church services to, so we've had to make sure everyone stayed up to date. To keep it simple, every Sunday morning at 9:30 AM we sent an email with a direct link to where our service was being streamed. This gives us the freedom to change platforms as we need to, but makes sure our congregation knows where to find us.

Whichever platform we broadcast to, we would always upload a copy of that to our Youtube and Facebook pages to ensure any newcomers would always stumble across our latest service.

### Consider:

- How do your congregation learn about the upcoming changes to your worship?
- How do newcomers learn about the upcoming changes to your worship?

## 3. You always need more adaptors than you think

Initially we thought it shouldn't be too hard to just hook up an iPad to my phone and stream, however, as is often the case with old churches, audio became a problem! With too much echo, we had to try to plug a 2019 iPad into a sound system - that I think predates Apple existing! Our current audio setup has five different adaptors to convert our sound system into our iPad. You always need more adaptors than you think!

**Consider:**

- What A/V systems do you currently have in your church building?
- How many steps are required to plug that into more modern equipment?

## **4. You're there for the community, but the community is there for you too**

A huge part of being a village church is being an active part of the local community. Although often the churches role in that community is to give and support, sometimes the community can give to and support the church.

Practically for St John's, this has meant asking advice from locals we know with audio and technical knowledge (often in exchange for a beer or two). We've also borrowed A/V equipment from local businesses to keep us online. Our neighbouring parish's church, St James' Shireshead, has an ex BBC videographer in their congregation, and they've been a great help in keeping them online, too.

Often an unofficial tagline for villages churches is *do what you can with what you have*, however being part of a small community means you can say *do what you can with what the community has*.

**Consider:**

- What skills do your congregation members have?
- What trades/ services are in your local community?





## 5. Be agile

In all we've done at St John's, we've made sure that we're open to new ideas and stay agile as a community. Churches have the stereotype of thinking: "We've never done it like that before". COVID-19 has taught us the importance of holding onto things lightly and being open to new ways to engage people.

As we all return to our buildings in different ways, some immediately, some later, it's going to be exciting to watch as churches 'do church' in new and innovative ways.

### Consider:

- What good or interesting idea have you seen other churches do?
- Is there an expression of that idea which you could implement in your community?

**Geraint Harries**

St John's Church

***What has your church learnt through lockdown? Share your story [here](#).***

## **Learn more about some of the topics mentioned in this blog**

- [Getting started with Mailchimp](#)
- [A beginners guide to going live with your service or event](#)
- [Supporting congregations and people exploring faith online as churches begin to reopen](#)

Learn more about digital communications for your church

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- **Everything you need to know about the Church Organiser**

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