

Sharing Our Story...

Responding to the Coronavirus

Llanelwy Community Church



Perhaps you have heard of isolation sensation Joe Wicks - his 'PE with Joe' attracting up to 850,000 connections. Perhaps you have heard of English with Holly - saving desperate home-schooling parents with inspirational English lessons. But you probably have not heard of Gerald. John Thompson, minister at Llanelwy Community Church, shares the story of the latest online celebrity...

"Desperate parents of toddlers in St Asaph and beyond are isolated away from their oasis of sanity, their weekly toddler group, 'Stay and Play' (Aros a Chware). However, they have flocked to the screens to get their toddlers to stay in touch with the puppet Gerald. Gerald was already well known to the toddlers of 'Stay and Play' at LlCC. He regularly helped with the short Bible story, or Christian-themed message.

Now the team have continued to offer Gerald at the same weekly time that the toddler group used to take place, but they have moved online. Gerald is now on Facebook Live each week. At it's peak, there were 25 families with people making comments,

answering quiz questions, sending in requests for songs and joining in from home. The toddlers' show continues to be very popular. It's an opportunity to chat and interact for parents, with the children enjoying the familiarity and connection too. Half of those connecting have no other link with the church. Not bad for a church that usually has 20-30 people on a Sunday. LlCC has a strong missional focus.

The children send in photos of things they have made in response to craft ideas from the previous week and Gerald and his helper congratulate them. Gerald starts by putting his hand in the bag to see what is there, and he slowly pulls it out showing the item little-by-little and letting the children guess what it is. The parents send in their guesses on the Facebook Live chat on their behalf. This item introduces the theme, and then the helper tells the story for this week. Then there are a couple of questions for Gerald to ask - the children join in too and send in requests for songs. I admit to being surprised to hear how well it was working! It was wonderful to see God is at work at the missional fringes of church as well as through online services and home groups. Please pray for the adults and children hearing stories from familiar faces, but in a new context. Perhaps at a time when they are more open to thinking about God, who knows what God might do? While this is already doing Kingdom work, God might do immeasurably more. We pray for salvation. We ask, hope and pray.

How could you reach out to local families at this time? What could be your Gerald?