

## Church Innovation Insider

By Rev. Lorenzo Lebríja • Feb 04, 2022

Smart Brevity® count: 4.5 mins... 1230 words

**Hi friends! Lorenzo Lebríja here.**

With so much going on and with omicron on the decline, travel is picking back up again. See you along the road!

👉 **Wanna meet?** Speaking of travel, are you going to the CEEP conference later this month? If so and you want to talk about innovation, [let me know!](#) I'll be there too!

### 1 big thing: Episcopal Pulse reveals important weaknesses (and strengths)

#### Episcopal Pulse Micro-Survey #1

In what areas of congregational life are you finding success?

In what areas of congregational life are you struggling?



The survey took place Jan 1-2, 2022. Respondents are a representative sample of the Episcopal Church.

**The results from** the first *Episcopal Pulse* survey show that a significant majority of the church feels we are struggling in the areas of evangelism and discipleship/formation.

**Why it matters:** The Rev. Ken Howard, director of FaithX and experiment manager for the *Episcopal Pulse* experiment tells us:

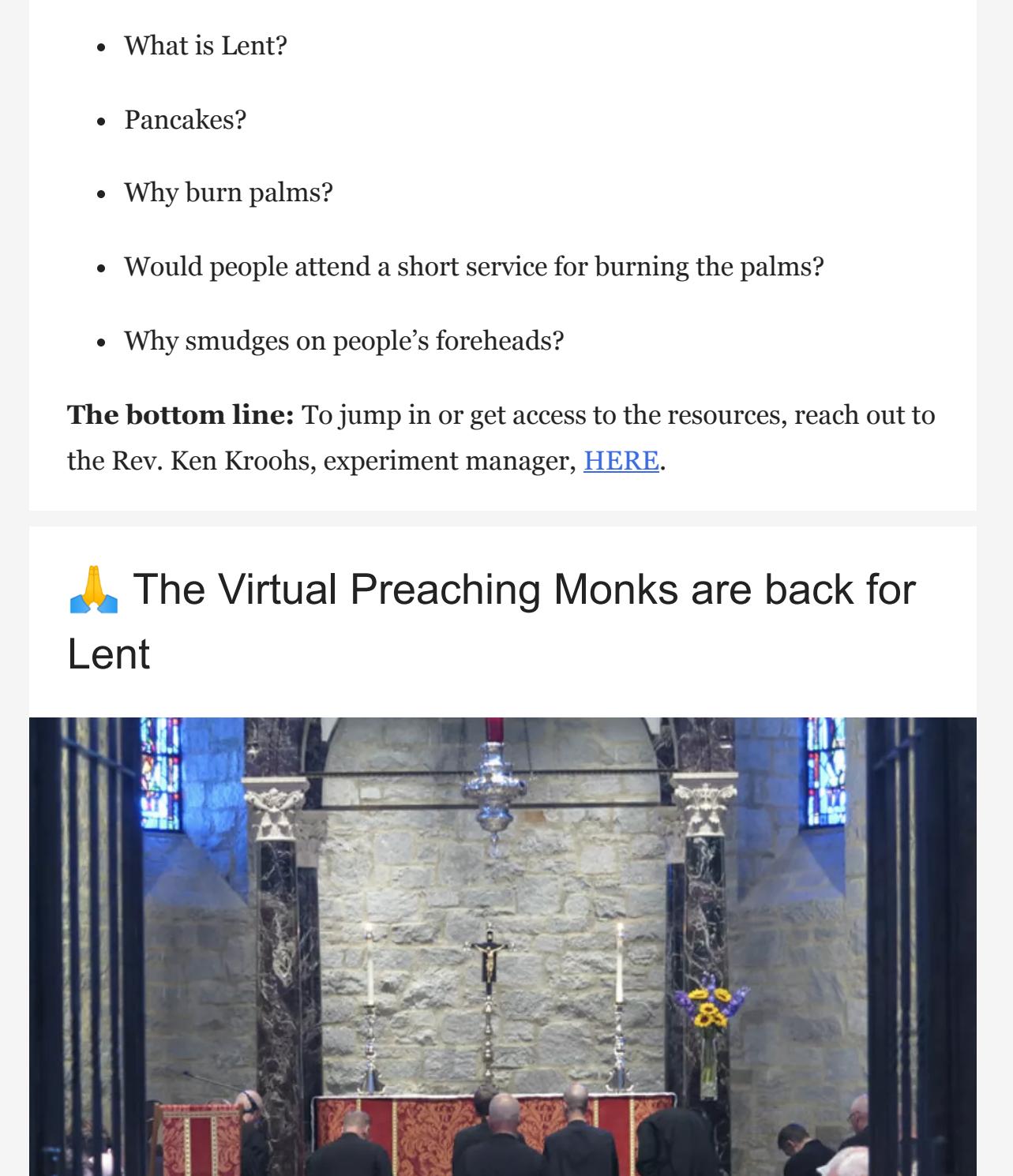
- When I saw the results of our first Episcopal Plus Micro-Survey, the song that immediately came to mind was “[Dance Band on the Titanic](#)” by Harry Chapin.
- “We’ve hit the iceberg, but our music is great!”
- The fact that we most struggle with both parts of Jesus’ Great Commission is concerning but not a great surprise. After all, “Evangelism feels” feels like the “E-word” to most Episcopalians.

**Yes, but:** Perhaps it’s not yet time to pack up our tents and go home. There may be hope in the finding that our congregations do a pretty decent job of outreach to the neighborhoods they serve.

- What if we could think of evangelism not as pressuring someone to convert, but simply as living our relationship with Jesus out loud among our neighbors?
- We might get a little more traction in the Evangelism department.
- After all, neither Jesus (nor the Apostle Paul) never uttered the literal word “convert.”

**Our thought bubble:** You can start to work on evangelism TODAY by checking out the 6th story below!

### First-ever Episcopal worship in the metaverse is Feb 28



Avatars for the Rev. Chris Fentress-Gannon (left) and the Rev. Joshua Barrett of the VirgTank metaverse experiment say hello.

**What's new:** Web3 Abbey, the experimental Christian community in the metaverse, will host the first-ever Episcopal worship service in the virtual world later this month.

**Why it matters:** During a recent webinar about the church and the metaverse, futurist Bob Johansen made the point that the metaverse is the next iteration of the web. And that it is coming like a wave.

**Go deeper:** Last September, a new kind of missionary came to be in the Episcopal Church (and the Holy Hermits in Australia) as several members of the clergy and laypeople began to explore the church in the metaverse.

- The team has spent months figuring out virtual reality (VR) technology, the different spaces in the virtual world, and how a church might function there.
- The first worship service is **Monday, February 28, 2022, at 7:00 PM CST**
- To join in or to learn more contact the team [HERE](#).

⚠️ **The Episcopal News Service** just ran a story on Web3 Abbey. You can read it [HERE](#).

### Office of Latino Ministries takes over “El Librito de la Misa”



Members of the Spanish-language congregation of St. James Episcopal Cathedral in Fresno, CA, use the “Librito” to pray.

The Office of Latino Ministries of the Episcopal Church has agreed to take over the “*Librito de la Misa Episcopal*.”

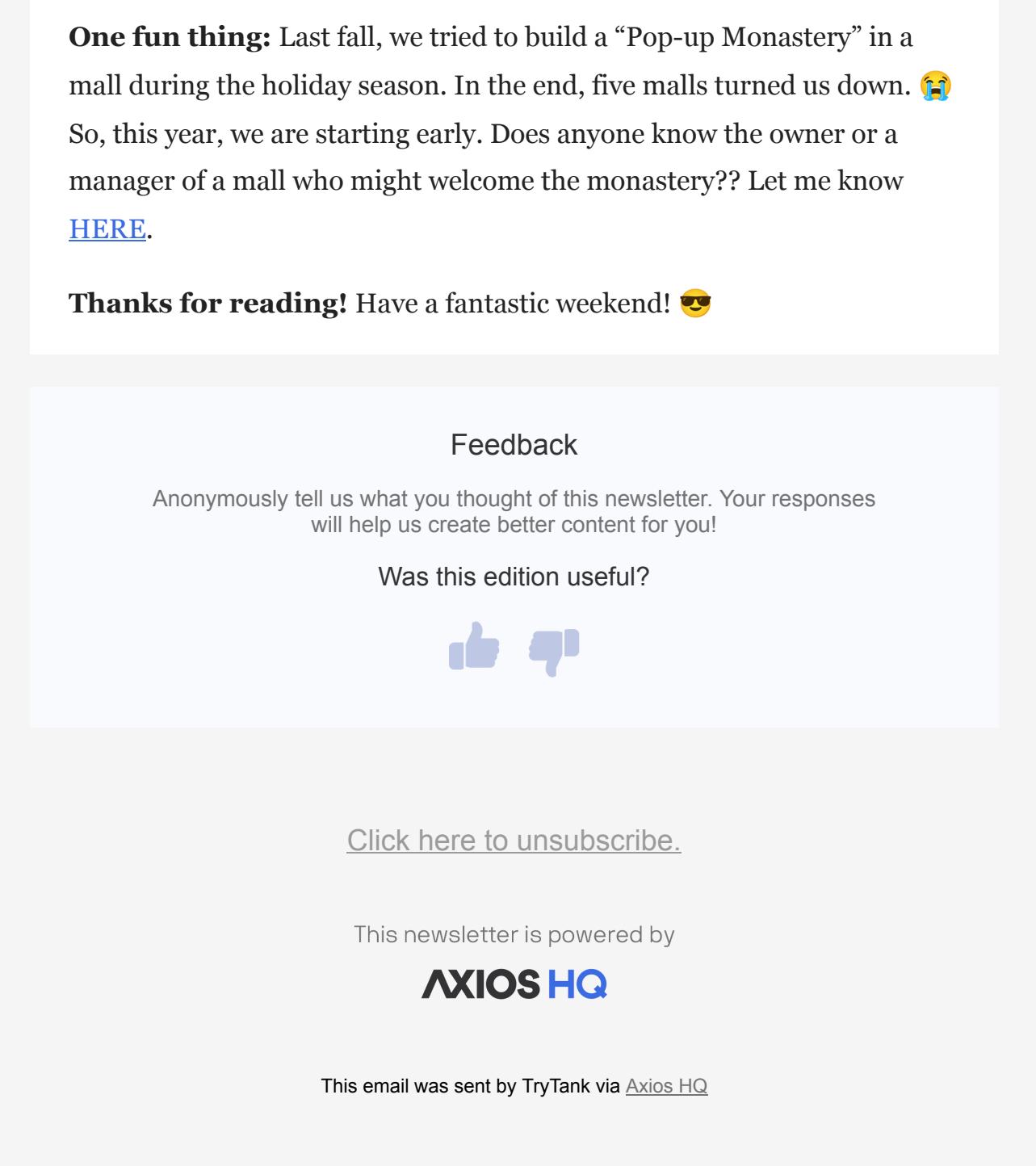
**Go deeper:** The *Librito* was the outcome of the “Spanish Missalette” experiment from TryTank.

- It sought to save a few hours per week of the clergy who lead Spanish-language services by providing everything they need in one booklet.
- There were more orders than the available 10,000 initial print run.
- So far, the participants who have reported have told us that they are saving 1 to 6 hours a week.

**Why it matters:** Clergy are overworked and can use the extra saved time for other pastoral matters. Or, hopefully, some self-care.

**Our thought bubble:** Thank you to the Rev. Anthony Guillen and the Rev. Samuel Borbon, who are such willing partners with the work of TryTank!

### New experiment to explore spirituality of young adults



Young people are very interested in spirituality but not in the church.

**What's new:** TryTank is undertaking an experiment in cultivating deep relationships.

- In partnership with The Retreat House in Hillsboro (MD), this experiment seeks to invite young adults with varying faith backgrounds into one-on-one or small group conversations to explore their spiritual longings.

**Why it matters:** It is a form of evangelism that leads from a listening heart rather than trying to persuade or direct.

**Big picture:** We plan to share our findings widely through a report that captures the longings heard in conversation.

**Then, out of these learnings,** the experiment team will come up with possible experiments to engage with young adults. Stay tuned!

### New offering for smaller congregations: Prayer School



Prayer School is a workshop that will help you form your habit of prayer by drawing on liturgical disciplines.

As part of the *1730 Project* which aims to help smaller congregations thrive, TryTank offers an online class aimed at their members.

**Why it matters:** smaller congregations usually cannot offer robust classes to their members. So, what if we could offer a class where smaller congregations can invite their members?

**Go deeper:** Prayer School is a workshop that will help participants form their habit of prayer by drawing on liturgical disciplines. It is an introduction where participants will learn:

- A healthy theology of prayer
- To support a daily prayer time
- To read scripture systematically throughout the year
- Contemplative techniques of prayer
- About the tradition of the Daily Office and liturgical calendar
- About how liturgy helps us mature in Christ

**The bottom line:** To sign up to offer the resources, you need to register as one of our *1730 Project* congregations. You can do so [HERE](#).

### The third phase of the evangelism experiment focuses on Easter



Will faceless strangers become our friends?

**TryTank has launched** the third phase of its very successful evangelism experiment.

**Do you ever wonder** if the shadowy figures drifting past your church can become friends with names and faces? That's what our current experiment is testing.

- Can we use social media and other avenues to introduce ourselves to strangers and then build a relationship that leads to spiritual conversations and maybe attendance?

**People love** to hear answers to their questions:

- What is Lent?
- Pancakes?
- Why burn palms?
- Would people attend a short service for burning the palms?
- Why smudges on people's foreheads?

**The bottom line:** To jump in or get access to the resources, reach out to the Rev. Ken Kroohs, experiment manager, [HERE](#).

### The Virtual Preaching Monks are back for Lent



The Society of Saint John the Evangelist takes time to pray.

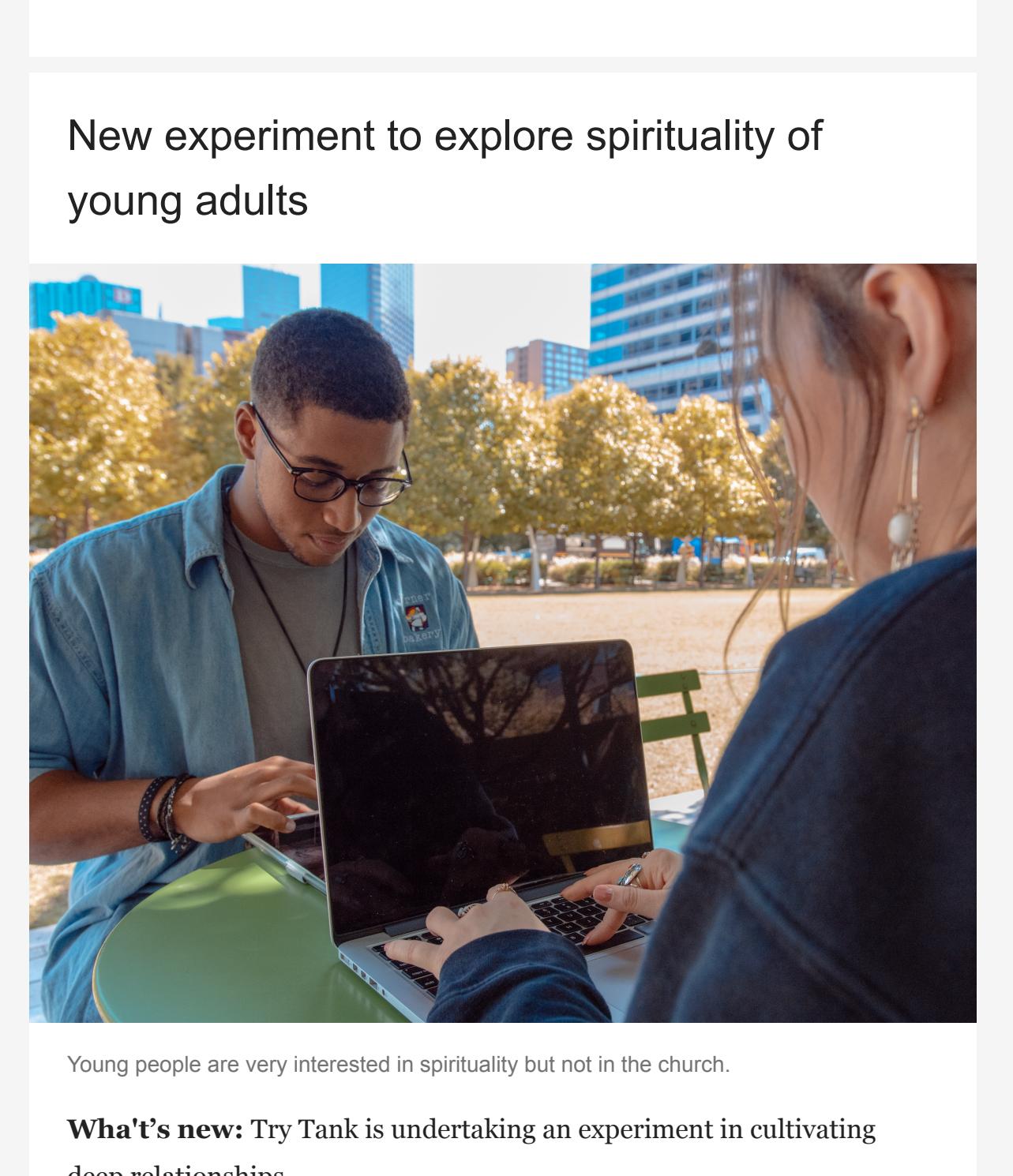
**The Virtual Preaching Monks** launched last year as part of TryTank's *1730 Project* experiments.

- The Brothers of the Society of St. John the Evangelist (SSJE) provided sermons for the Advent season.
- 484 congregations (and some individuals!) signed up for the resource.

**Why it matters:** As a whole, the Episcopal Church has significantly more smaller congregations than larger ones. The *1730 Project* aims to help them thrive.

**What's next:** The Brothers of SSJE will offer a sermon series for Lent. If you'd like to use this resource, sign up to be “in the know” about the *1730 Project* [HERE](#).

**Who wants to try this?**



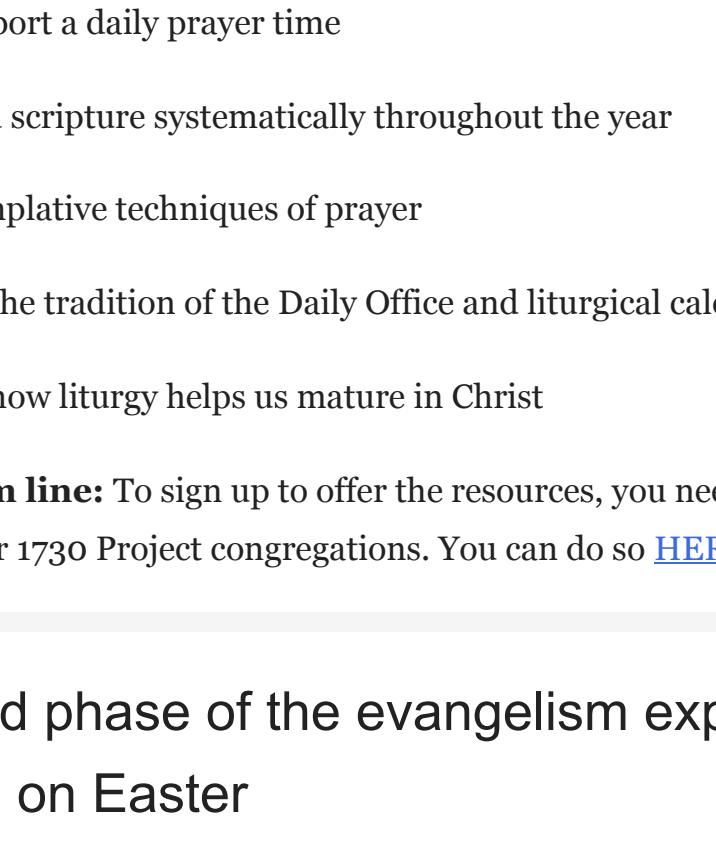
Screen capture of the iScanner app in action.

**Someone out there**, try this: the iScanner app uses AI technology to snap a picture and quickly count things for you. You can see a short [video of it in action here](#).

- Could it count how many people are in church on Sunday?
- Try it out, and [let us know](#) how it goes. Send pictures!

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### Upcoming events from Lifelong Learning



Building Faith Basics: Preparing Families for the Baptism of a Child

Feb 8 Digital Storytelling for Church Communications Professionals

Feb 19 & 26 Prayer School - Lord, Teach Us to Pray

Feb 20 - Apr 24 Godly Play Circle for Families via Zoom

Mar 2 May She Flourish: Strategies for Fighting Everyday Sexism

Mar 5 Godly Play Commuter Core Training Module 3: Supporting the Circle of Children and Liturgical Action Lessons

Mar 10 - Apr 7 Walking the Way of Lent through Storytelling with Bishop Porter Taylor

Apr 6 May She Flourish: Developing Your Well-Being Toolkit

May 13 Faith in the Future Talks (Part 3 released - Parts 1-2 will be available for registrants as well)

June 5-10 Deep Calls to Deep Residency 2022 - "The Future of Preaching in a Changed World"

July 6 TryTank's "Church in 2032" movie released

**Click to register.**

**One fun thing:** Last fall, we tried to build a “Pop-up Monastery” in a mall during the holiday season. In the end, five malls turned us down. 😱 So, this year, we are starting early. Does anyone know the owner or a manager of a mall who might welcome the monastery?? Let me know [HERE](#).

**Thanks for reading!** Have a fantastic weekend! 😊

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