

WHY SHOULD THE CHURCH CARE?

Sure, this is a video game, not the heady and vital concerns of our fragile state. But this game offers us an opportunity to witness to the type of community and hospitality that Jesus calls us to in the gospels. And our grand Episcopal Church welcome must be extended over and over again—not only to those dressed in Sunday best and perched on pews but also to those who are wandering by on a Tuesday morning, perhaps to find something they didn't know they were looking for.

WAYS TO ENGAGE

- 1 Find out if your church is a Pokestop. Download the free game to figure that out—or, if you have people hanging around with their phones, then it's a good guess that your location is part of the game.
- 2 Welcome folks to your church. If you're able, have greeters outside to engage visitors. Hang a poster (Forward Movement has one that you can download) to welcome gamers. Put out some welcome brochures along with disposable glasses and a cooler with ice water. Open the doors to the church and invite folks to come and explore—and maybe provide a cool place to rest and recharge their phones.
- 3 Encourage folks to share their Pokémon Go experiences on your congregation and personal social media feeds. Set up a personal hashtag or use #pokevangelism for it to flow into the larger Episcopal Church Pokémon feed. Share your church's experiences at #parishpokemon.
- 4 Engage Pokémon Go users in your congregation. Brainstorm together about how to encourage and support visitors. Maybe the congregation could host a Pokémon gathering or offer a raffle of Pokémon accessories (and get visitor information at the same time!). Work within your local community to figure out the best offerings.
- 5 Be joyful, not fearful. Be willing and ready to see Christ in all people—strangers, gamers, neighbors, and friends.

POKÉMON GO FORTH

Pikachus and Pokestops, Charmanders, gyms, battles, and trainers are providing new opportunities to welcome people into our churches. Millions are playing Pokémon Go, an augmented reality game that was released in July. And loads of folks are showing up at and in our churches as part of the game play. How can we respond? With a warm welcome, gracious hospitality, and a sincere-but-not-pushy invitation to continue their search, perhaps this time for faith in community.



WHAT IS POKÉMON GO?

The video game of Pokémon isn't new. It started in the late 1990s in Japan. The goal is to collect virtual creatures through battles, adventures, and trainings. In addition to the Pokémon video game, there are trading cards and a slew of tchotchkes. What's new is the release of Pokémon Go. Run on an Android or iOS system, the game uses a phone's GPS and clock to detect your location and then make Pokémon "appear" on the screen. You then capture the Pokémon and continue on the quest to "Catch 'em all."

It's anyone's guess why Pokémon Go has become wildly popular in such a short time—an estimated 7.5 million downloads in the first week! But the impact is that people of all ages are exploring new places as part of the game. And our churches are frequent hangouts for virtual Pokémon and real-life players.

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