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Introduction

This article presents a project built on a simple but powerful idea:

Our data is our AI strategy.

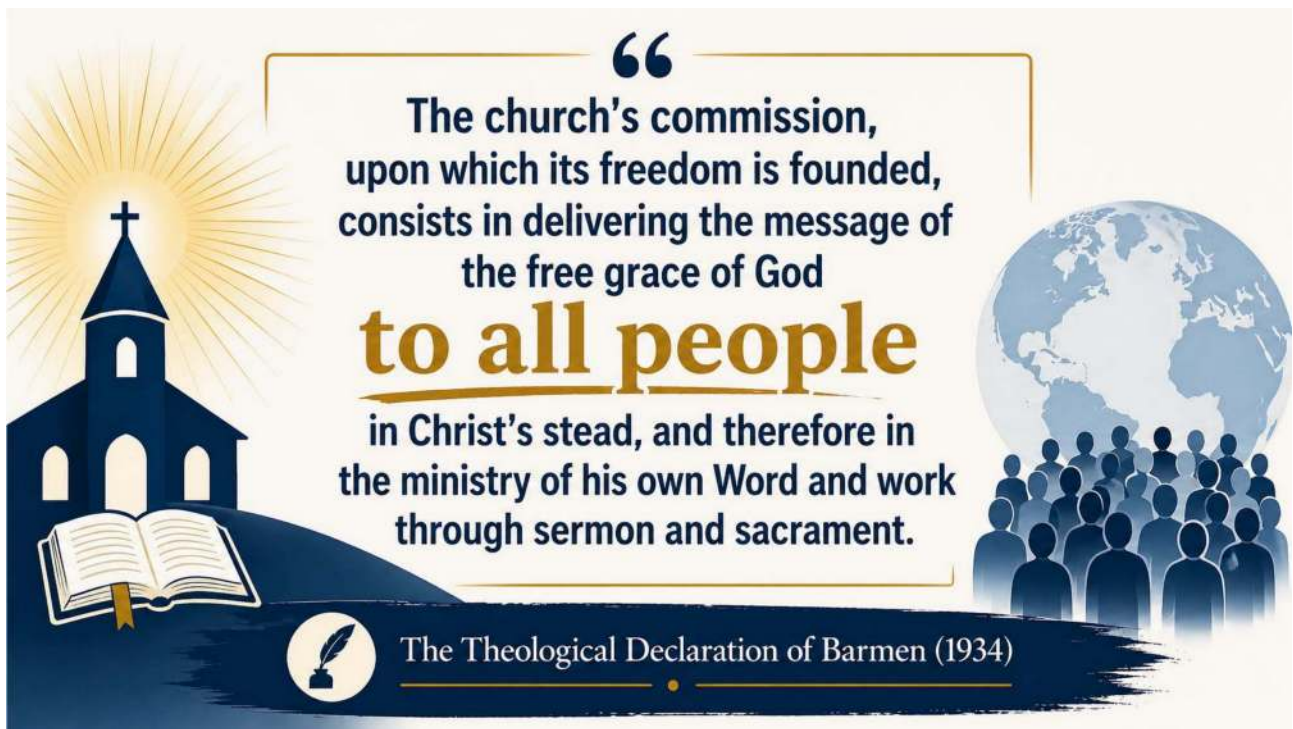
The key question is:

How can we feed structured data from parishes into AI systems so that churches remain visible, accessible, and relevant in an AI-driven world?

To answer this, we need to look at theology, technology, and practical implementation.

Theological Considerations





A Theological Starting Point

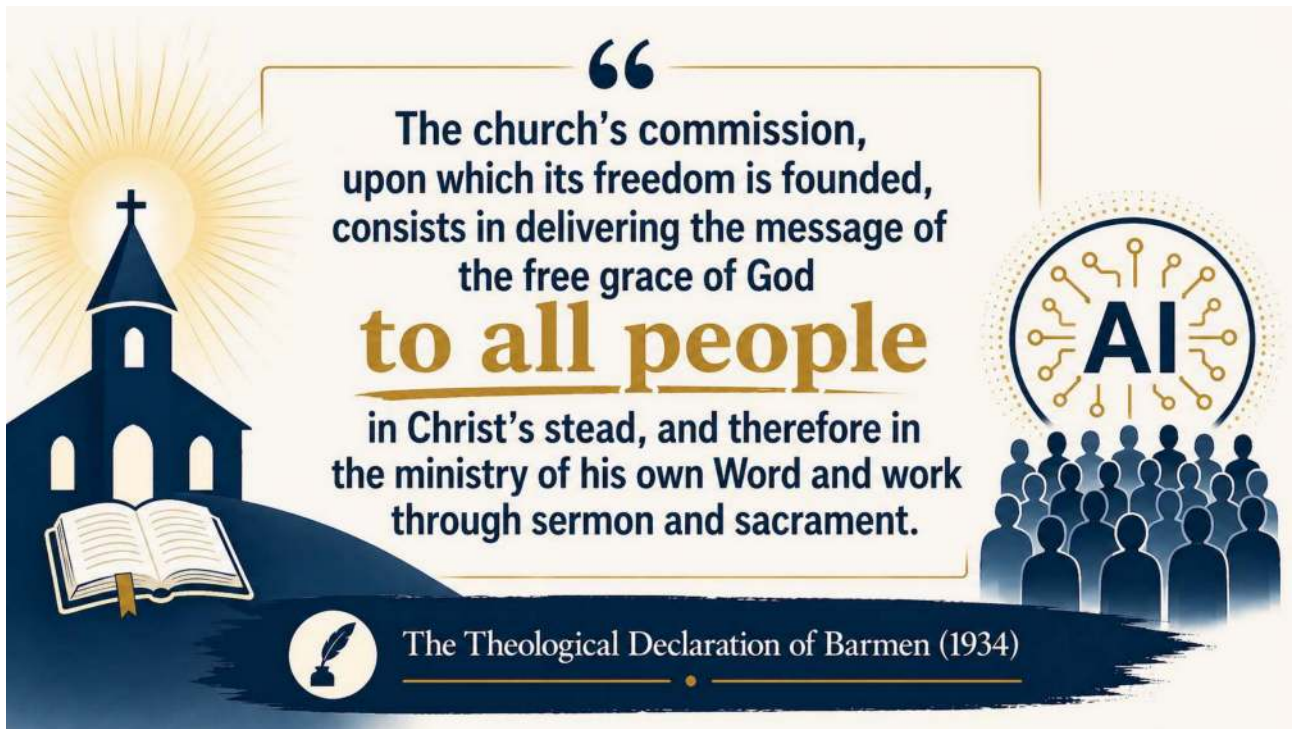
Let me begin with a brief theological reflection.

About 50 kilometers from where I live lies Barmen. In 1934, the **Barmen Theological Declaration** was formulated there. It affirmed the core of the Christian faith against the influence of Nazi ideology within the church.

One key takeaway from this declaration is:

The gospel of God's grace is meant for all people.

At the time, this statement was directed against exclusion. The message of the gospel was not meant for a specific group, but for everyone.



What Does This Mean in the Age of AI?

Today, this principle raises a new question:

If the gospel is meant for all people, are we using all available channels to reach them?

Traditionally, churches communicate through:

- Personal encounters
- Websites
- Social media

But in the digital age, **AI systems have become a new and increasingly important channel.**

If we want to reach all people, we must also ensure that our content is accessible through AI.



AI Changes the Game and is to Stay



The Growth of ChatGPT

ChatGPT was released to the public on November 30, 2022 as a “research preview,” and by December 5 it had more than one million registered users.

Figure 3 reports the growth of overall weekly active users (WAU) on consumer plans over time. ChatGPT had more than 100 million logged-in WAU after one year, and almost 350 million after two years. By the end of July 2025, ChatGPT had more than 700 million total WAU, nearly 10% of the world’s adult population.²⁰

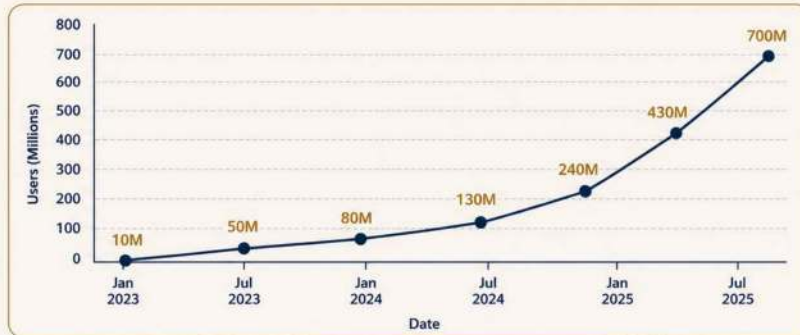


Figure 3: Weekly active ChatGPT users on consumer plans (Free, Plus, Pro), shown as point-in-time snapshots every six months, November 2022–September 2025.

Source: OpenAI (2025). “Economic Research: The Usage of ChatGPT.” <https://cdn.openai.com/pdf/a253471f-8260-40c6-a2cc-aa93fe9f142e/economic-research-chatgpt-usage-paper.pdf>

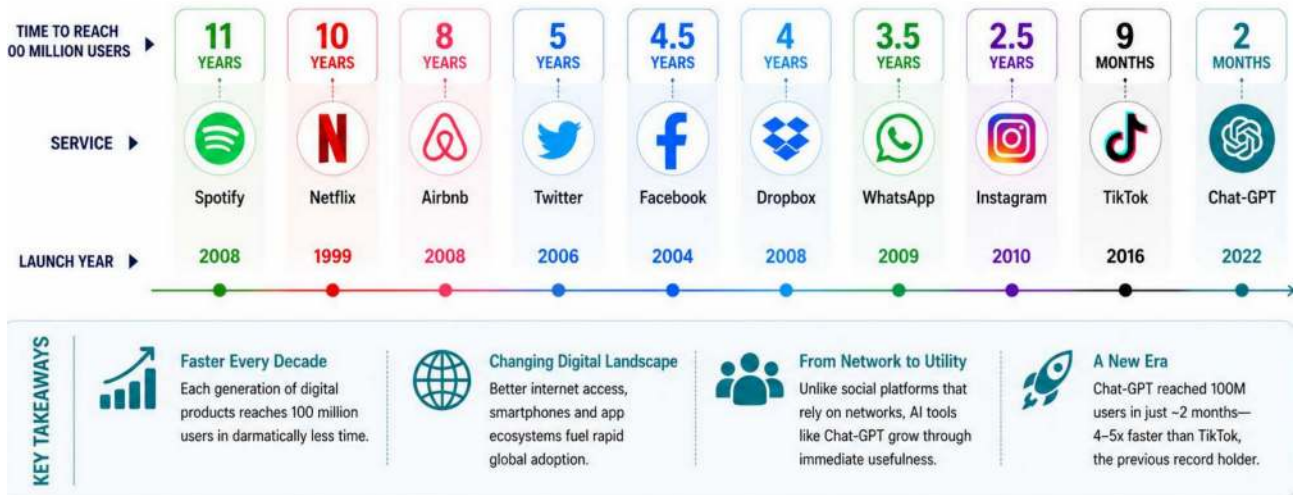
The Speed of Adoption

100 Million Users

The time it took for selected online services to reach 100 million users



Digital adoption is happening faster than ever. Chat-GPT reached 100 million users in just 2 months.



AI Changes the Game

Artificial intelligence is not just another technological trend—it fundamentally changes how people interact with information.

The growth of ChatGPT illustrates this dramatically:

- It reached **100 million users in just two months**
- TikTok needed nine months
- Spotify needed over a decade

And ChatGPT is not alone. Systems like **Claude, Gemini, and others** are rapidly gaining traction.

Implication

AI is changing:

- How people search
- How they consume information
- How they make decisions

This has direct consequences for the church's digital presence.



AI and Search





By 2026,

25-50%

of searches will move from traditional search to AI answers¹

1 Gartner, 2025

A Google search returns a ranked list of links to explore

Hotels near Munich Oktoberfest

Sponsored Ads

Map Pack

Organic Results

From Search Results to AI Answers

One of the most profound changes concerns search.

Traditional Search

When users search for something like “hotels near Munich Oktoberfest,” they receive:

- Sponsored ads
- Map results
- Lists of links

An AI conversation delivers an answer

Here's a straight rundown of your lodging options for September and early October, and accommodations book soon.

1. Hotels near Theresienwiese (festival grounds)

Pros: Walk to the tents, no transit headaches, total convenience.

If you won't have a car, your best bet is to **stay within walking distance of Theresienwiese**, where Oktoberfest happens. That way you avoid packed U-Bahn rides, late-night taxi hunts, or long walks through Munich when the crowds spill out.

Best Options Without Transportation

1. Hotels Directly by the Festival Grounds

- **Hotel Augustin:** Modern, clean, ~5 minutes from the tents.
- **Hotel Seibel:** Literally across from the Wiesn. Basic, noisy, but unbeatable for convenience.
- **Boutique Hotel Krone:** 10 minutes' walk. More character, less chaotic than being right on the gates.
- **Lizz Hotel:** Boutique, ~10 minutes away, quieter but still walkable.

2. Hotels Near Hauptbahnhof

- Euro Youth Hostel
- Wombat's City Hostel
- Jaeger's Hostel

Do you want me to **check what's still available walking distance for Sept 28-29?**

That'll narrow this down to realistic options, since Oktoberfest bookings go fast.

Where's the best place to stay in Munich near Oktoberfest that has family rooms & breakfast?

Which option is best if I don't have a car?

Yes, please!

AI-Based Search

AI systems work differently:

- They provide **direct answers**
- They engage in **conversations**
- They typically suggest **one or two options**, not dozens

This is why users increasingly prefer AI: it is faster, more intuitive, and more efficient.

AI overviews are reducing clicks and raising the stakes

When an AI Overview appears, site CTR drops from 16% to ~8%¹

Google Classic Search

Emergency Vet Paris

Results for Paris, France · Choose area

Businesses

- VETINPARIS - Veterinary EMERGENCY Paris**
4.7 ★★★★★ (189) · Veterinarian
7+ years in business · 89 Rue du Faubourg Saint-Antoine, 75012 Paris, France
Open 24 hours · +33 1 43 07 01 06
"The clinic is clean and welcoming, and the doctors are caring and competent."
- Veterinary Hospital Fréjols**
4.4 ★★★★★ (314) · Veterinarian
18+ years in business · Coutinvois, France
Open 24 hours · +33 1 49 85 82 00
"Everything was explained clearly and we were very happy with our experience."
- UCVet - Emergencies and Veterinary Consultations**
3.9 ★★★★★ (264) · Veterinarian
10+ years in business · 175 Rue des Pyrénées, 75020 Paris, France
Open 24 hours · +33 1 71 19 70 10
"Excellent service and care for my pet."

More businesses →

Map showing locations in Paris, France.

VS

Google AI Mode

My dog ate chocolate.
Should I call the vet?

Google AI Mode All Short videos Forums Videos Images Shopping More Tools

AI Overview

Yes, you should take your dog to the vet or call a poison control center immediately after it eats chocolate because it can be toxic and cause serious health issues. Provide your vet with the dog's weight, the type of chocolate, and the amount eaten to help assess the risk. Do not wait for symptoms to appear, as early treatment is crucial for a good prognosis.

Why chocolate is dangerous for dogs

Theobromine and Caffeine: Chocolate contains theobromine and caffeine, which dogs metabolize much more slowly than humans, leading to toxic buildup.

Chocolate toxicity in dogs: Signs, treatment, and prevention
Mar 10, 2024 — Theobromine is the main toxic compound in...
ARC

My Dog Ate a Corn Cob — What Should I Do? | VCA...
Aug 8, 2023 — Even if your dog is acting normal and eat...
VCA Hospitals

¹ Pew Research Center – Google's AI Summaries (2025)

The Decline of Clicks

Search engines themselves are changing. Google now provides AI-generated summaries.

The result:

- Users click less on websites
- Information is consumed directly within AI interfaces

Strategies to win in the AI era

1



Expand visibility beyond (Google) search

2



Create for people and train for machines (LLMs)

What This Means

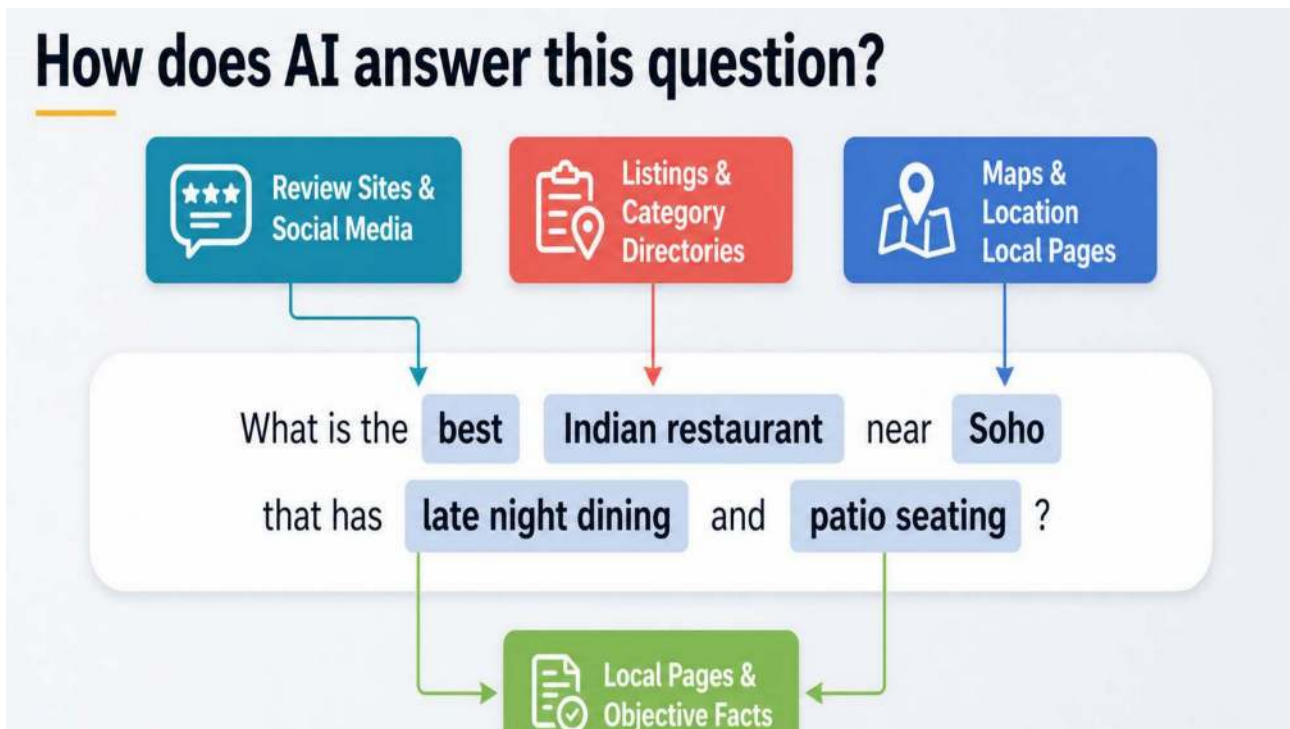
To remain visible, organizations must:

- Expand visibility beyond traditional search
- Create content for people
- Structure content so that machines can understand it

In short:

Create for people—and train for machines.

How does AI answer this question?



How AI Actually Answers Questions

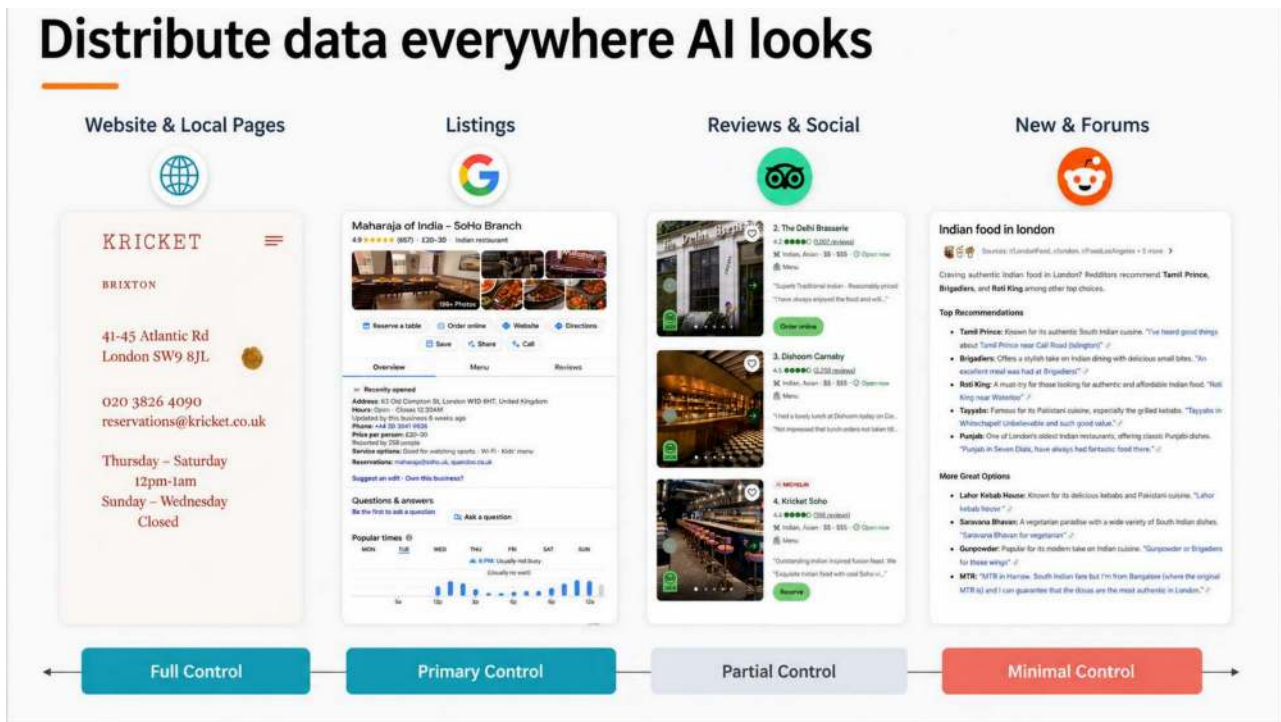
Consider a typical user query:

“What is the best Indian restaurant near Soho that has late-night dining and patio seating?”

AI processes this question by combining multiple data sources:

- **“Best”** → Reviews and social media
- **“Restaurant”** → Listings and categories
- **“Location”** → Maps
- **“Features”** → Websites and local pages

Distribute data everywhere AI looks



Key Insight

AI does not rely on a single source.
It aggregates and evaluates data across the web.

Data Distribution Matters

This has important implications.

Organizations have different levels of control over data sources:

- Full control: **websites**
- Partial control: **listings and social media**
- Minimal control: **forums and external discussions**

To succeed in AI-driven environments, organizations must focus on **the channels they control**—especially their own websites and structured data.



Churches in Searches and AI Queries



How does AI answer this question?



What is the **best** **church** in **Mülheim** with good **music** ?



Best:

Reviews & Social Media

AI checks ratings, reviews and mentions on platforms like Google Reviews, Facebook, Reddit and more.



Church:

Listings & Directories

AI looks at church directories, listings and relevant category pages.



Mülheim:

Maps & Local Websites

AI pulls information from Google Maps, local directories and websites about Mülheim.



Music:

Local Websites

AI checks church websites and event pages for information about music, worship style and choirs.

What This Means for Churches

The same logic applies to churches.

Consider the question:

“Where is the best church in Mülheim with good music?”

AI evaluates:

- Reviews and social media
- Church directories and listings
- Maps and location data
- Local websites (e.g., information about choirs or music programs)

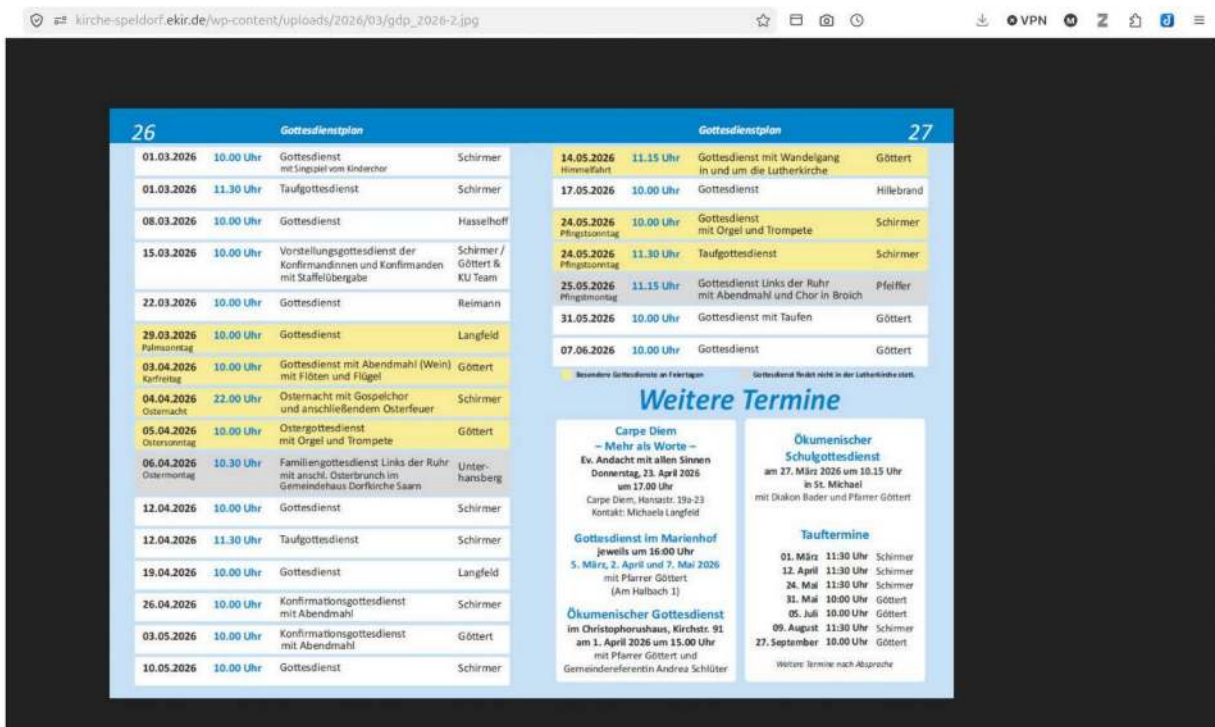
Conclusion

Churches are already part of AI queries—whether they realize it or not.



Reality Check





A Reality Check

Unfortunately, many churches are not well prepared.

A common example:

- Church schedules are uploaded as **images (JPEG files)**

This creates several problems:

- Search engines cannot index them
- AI systems cannot read them
- Accessibility is limited (e.g., for visually impaired users)

In practice, this means:

- Information is hard to find
- Churches remain invisible in digital environments

Welche Kirche in Mülheim hat die besten Predigten?

Eine sehr empfehlenswerte Kirche in Mülheim ist die

EFG Evangelisch freikirchliche Gemeinde Mülheim
 ★ 4.9 • Church



Warum ich sie für eine „beste Wahl“ halte:

- Die Gemeinde schreibt auf ihrer Webseite, dass bei Gottesdiensten „Gottes Wort ... gelesen und gepredigt“ wird und „Ermutigung, neue Impulse, schöpfen Kraft für den Alltag, neue Inspiration“ angeboten wird.
- Predigten können nachgeholt werden: „Die Predigten der vergangenen Gottesdienste sind auch als Audiodatei oder als YouTube-Video abrufbar“.
- Gute Bewertung bei Google (4.9 Sterne) – was darauf hindeutet, dass Besucher sehr zufrieden mit Atmosphäre und Verkündigung sind.

Wenn du möchtest, kann ich **drei bis fünf** Kirchen in Mülheim mit sehr guten Predigten auflisten, damit du schauen kannst, welche Richtung (evangelisch, freikirchlich, katholisch) am besten zu dir passt. Möchtest du das?

Ask anything

ChatGPT can make mistakes. Check important info. See [Cookie preferences](#).

A Cultural Challenge

There is also a cultural aspect.


In some contexts, such as the United States, churches actively encourage:

- Online reviews
- Digital engagement

In Germany, this is less common. However, improving digital visibility requires a shift in mindset.



Welche Kirche in Mülheim hat die besten Predigten?

Die "beste" Predigt ist eine sehr subjektive Empfindung, da dies von individuellen Präferenzen und Glaubensvorstellungen abhängt. Einige suchen vielleicht nach theologisch fundierten Predigten, während andere sich von charismatischen Rednern oder lebensnahen Bezügen ansprechen lassen. Es gibt jedoch einige Gemeinden in Mülheim, die für ihre Predigten und ihre aktive Gemeindearbeit positiv hervorgehoben wurden. 

Evangelische Gemeinden

Christus-Gemeinde Mülheim (Freikirche)

- Die Christus-Gemeinde Mülheim hat auf Google eine sehr hohe Bewertung (4.9 Sterne).
- Kommentare beschreiben die Gottesdienste als "fröhlich" und die Atmosphäre als "freundlich" und "offen", was auf ansprechende und lebendige Predigten hindeutet.
- Die Gemeinde betreibt eine Website mit einem Archiv, das einen Einblick in frühere Predigten bietet. 

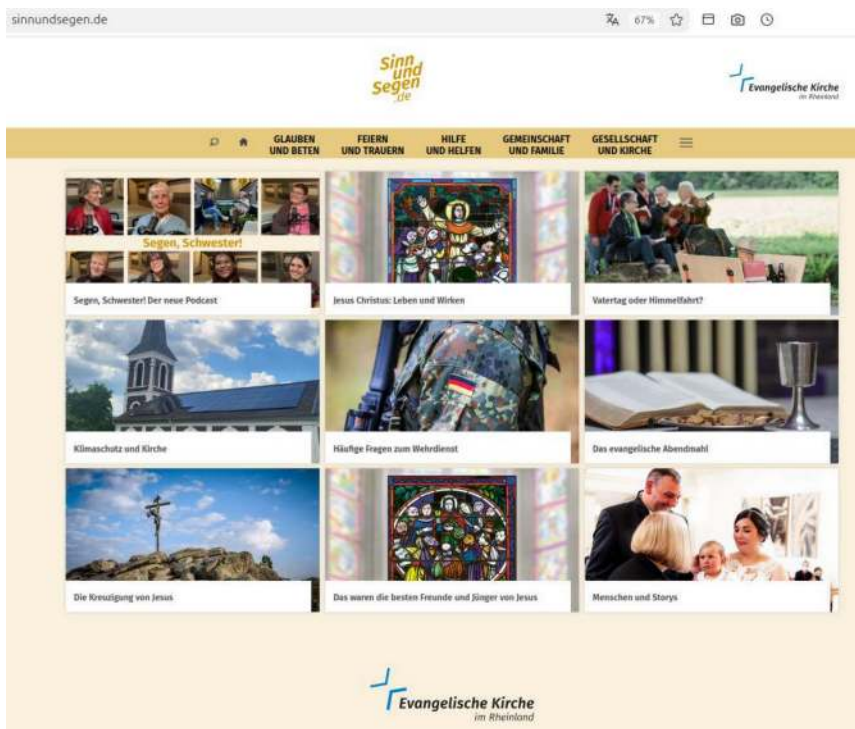


sinnundsegen.de Location Pages

with support of



Evangelische Kirche
in Deutschland



The Project: Structured Location Pages

To address these challenges, we initiated a project.

Core Idea

Create **location-based landing pages** that contain structured parish data.




These pages should serve:

- Human users
- AI systems
- Church systems

Objective

A dedicated landing page is created for each municipality / city

Content includes:

-  Protestant church buildings
-  Events, services, and activities
-  Additional local information

Based on: EKD project "Digitale Kirchtürme" and regional church event calendars (decentralized)

Building on Existing Foundations

The project does not start from scratch.

It builds on:

- The EKD initiative "**Digital Kirchtürme**"
- Regional church event calendars

Current Status

We have developed a **minimum viable product (MVP)**:

- Landing pages for each federal state
- Lists of cities and municipalities
- Detailed pages for each location
 - Church buildings
 - Events and services



Nordrhein-Westfalen

Die *Evangelische Kirche im Rheinland*, die *Evangelische Kirche von Westfalen* und die *Lippische Landeskirche* liegen im Gebiet des Bundeslandes Nordrhein-Westfalen.

Ritte beachten Sie, dass nicht für alle Orte Daten verfügbar sind. Über die *Gemeindeseite* der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland können Sie jedoch flächendeckend die jeweils zuständige Kirchengemeinde finden.

Nach Stadt filtern



A

Aachen

Ahaus

Ahlen

Aldenhoven

Alfter



Kirchen und kirchliche Einrichtungen in Aachen

Nach Postleitzahl filtern:

Alle anzeigen

Standorte nach Kategorie filtern:

Alle anzeigen



Auferstehungskirche - Evangelische Kirchengemeinde Aachen

Am Kupferhofen 19-21
52066 Aachen

Anfahrt anzeigen

Telefon: [+49241453110](tel:+49241453110)

E-Mail: aachen@ekd.de

Website: <https://www.evangelisch-in-aachen.de>

> Services anzeigen
> Beschreibung anzeigen



Dreifaltigkeitskirche - Evangelische Kirchengemeinde Aachen

Ecke Zollerstraße/Herzogstraße
52070 Aachen

Anfahrt anzeigen

Telefon: [+491609627289](tel:+491609627289)

E-Mail: ekd@ekd-aachen.de

Website: <https://ekd-aachen.de>

> Services anzeigen
> Beschreibung anzeigen

Veranstaltungen in Aachen

Nach Kategorie filtern:

Alle anzeigen

Malen Aquarell und Pastellkreide

27. April 2026 um 09:30

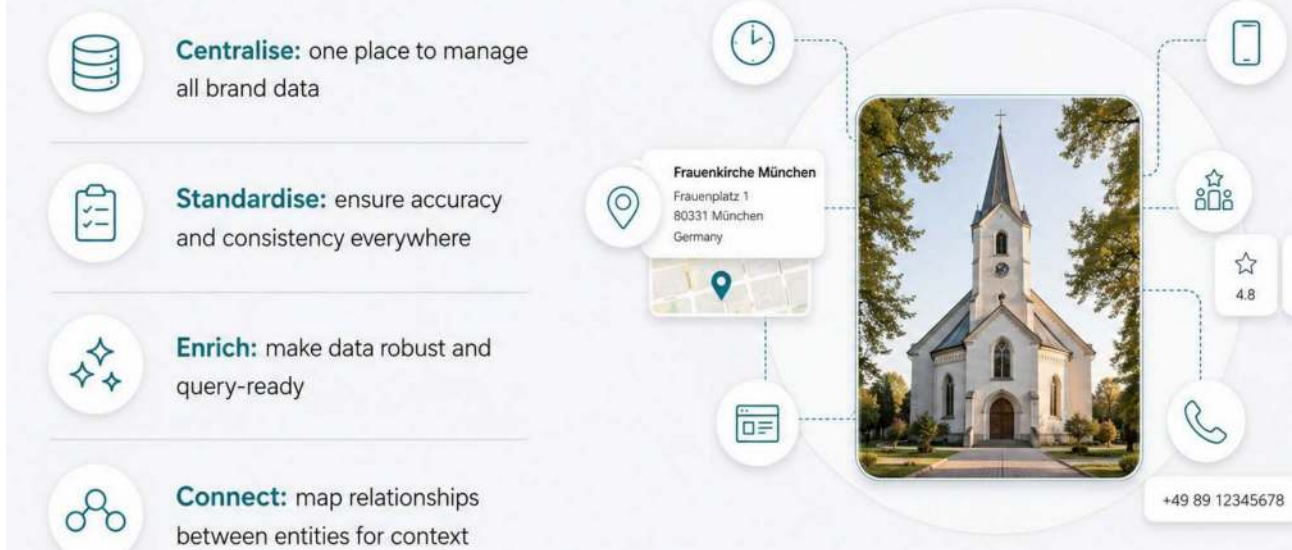
Fortbildungen / Seminare / Vorträge
Schlackheimer Straße 12-16
52076 Aachen

EinewellLaden in der GenezarethKirche

27. April 2026 um 11:00

Vallor Straße 349
52074 Aachen

Structured data builds trust with AI answer engines






A Clear Data Strategy

The project focuses on four key principles:

- **Centralize** data
- **Standardize** formats
- **Enrich** content
- **Connect** entities (locations, buildings, events)

Use Cases

-  Users search for a church or service
-  AI systems retrieve structured data
-  SEO: Improved discoverability per location

Use Cases





The system supports two main use cases:

1. **People searching for churches or services**
2. **AI systems retrieving structured data**

In addition, it improves:

- Search engine optimization (SEO)
- Discoverability at the local level

Challenges & Requirements

-  Completeness for each location
-  Up-to-date event information
-  Consistent structure: Location → Building → Events
-  Validated tagging of all data according to schema.org

Challenges and Requirements

To succeed, the project must ensure:

- Completeness of data for each location
- Up-to-date event information
- A consistent structure:
 - Location → Building → Event
- Validated tagging using **schema.org**

https://standorte.sinnundseggen.de/duisburg

Neuer Test



```

1 <html lang="de"><head><link rel="stylesheet" href="/assets/static/index-vJapKY01.css"/>
2 <script href="/assets/static/city-xdVfIC0x.css"/><title>Evangelische Kirche in Duisburg | Sinn und
3 = "UTF-8"/>
4 <script> content="width=device-width, initial-scale=1"/>
5 <script> content="image/x-icon" href="/assets/static/favicon-q3M004vI.png"/>
6 <script> content="Evangelische Kirche in Duisburg: 74 Standorte, 1180 Veranstaltungen. Finde evang
7 <script> content="Evangelische Kirche in Duisburg | Sinn und Segen"/>
8 <script> content="Evangelische Kirche in Duisburg: 74 Standorte, 1180 Veranstaltungen. Fin
9 <script> content="website"/>
10 <script> content="summary"/>
11 <script> content="index, follow"/>
12 <script href="/duisburg"/><script type="module">
13 <script> import.meta.url)
14 <script> await import(componentURL);
15 <script> import.meta.url)
16 <script> await import(renderURL);
17 <script>
18 <script>
19 <script> component.default,
20 <script> JSON.parse(decodeURIComponent("%7B%22document%22%3A%7B%22_%32%3A%78%22entityPageSet%22%3A%
21 <script>
22 <script>
23 <script> var IS_PRODUCTION = true; var PRODUCTION_DOMAINS = JSON.parse("{}primary":{"ekir-locations.
24 <script>
25 <script> <div class="min-h-screen flex flex-col"><header class="bg-white shadow h-24 flex items-
26 <script> ca de Habla Hispana: Fundada en 1964, es un refugio espiritual abierto a todas las personas de h
27 <script>
28 >

```

@type	Listitem
position	894
item	
@type	Event
@id	https://termine.ekir.de/id-990066
name	Gottesdienst
uri	https://termine.ekir.de/id-990066
startDate	2026-12-13T11:00:00
endDate	2026-12-13T12:00:00
eventAttendanceMode	http://schema.org/OfflineEventAttendanceMode
eventStatus	http://schema.org/EventScheduled
location	
@type	Place
name	Duisburg
address	
@type	PostalAddress
streetAddress	Kaiser-Friedrich-Str. 40
postalCode	47169
addressLocality	Duisburg
addressCountry	
@type	Country
name	DE
ItemListElement	
@type	Listitem
position	895
item	
@type	Event
@id	https://termine.ekir.de/id-1026168

Goal

≈ 750,000 Entities nationwide

The Goal

By the end of next year, the project aims to provide:

👉 ≈ 750,000 entities nationwide

This includes:

- Church buildings
- Worship services
- Events and activities

AI understands intent — and delivers the right answer



The Vision

The ultimate goal is simple but powerful.

Imagine a user asking:

“I want to attend a Christmas service with kids in Cologne.”

The AI system should:

- Understand the intent
- Identify relevant options
- Provide a reliable, helpful answer

Conclusion

The digital landscape is changing rapidly.

AI is becoming a primary interface for information.

If churches want to remain visible and relevant, they must adapt.

The key insight is clear:

👉 **Structured, high-quality data is essential.**

Because in the age of AI:

Your data is your strategy.

Credits & Links

- Rebecca Colwell, Sam Dais: Winning Search in EMEA:
How Yext Scout drives visibility across local and AI platforms
- Silverstein, J., Martin, K., Antin, A., Kaba, R., Pellegrini, L., Jenkins, A., & Ferguson, C. (2023). Predicts 2024: How GenAI Will Reshape Tech Marketing (No. G00800771). Gartner, Inc.
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<https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2025/07/22/google-users-are-less-likely-to-click-on-links-when-an-ai-summary-appears-in-the-results/>
- Digitale Kirchtürme:
<https://www.ekd.de/digitale-kirchturme-fur-bessere-suchergebnisse-53303.htm>
- <https://standorte.sinnundsegen.de>