



Church Innovation Insider

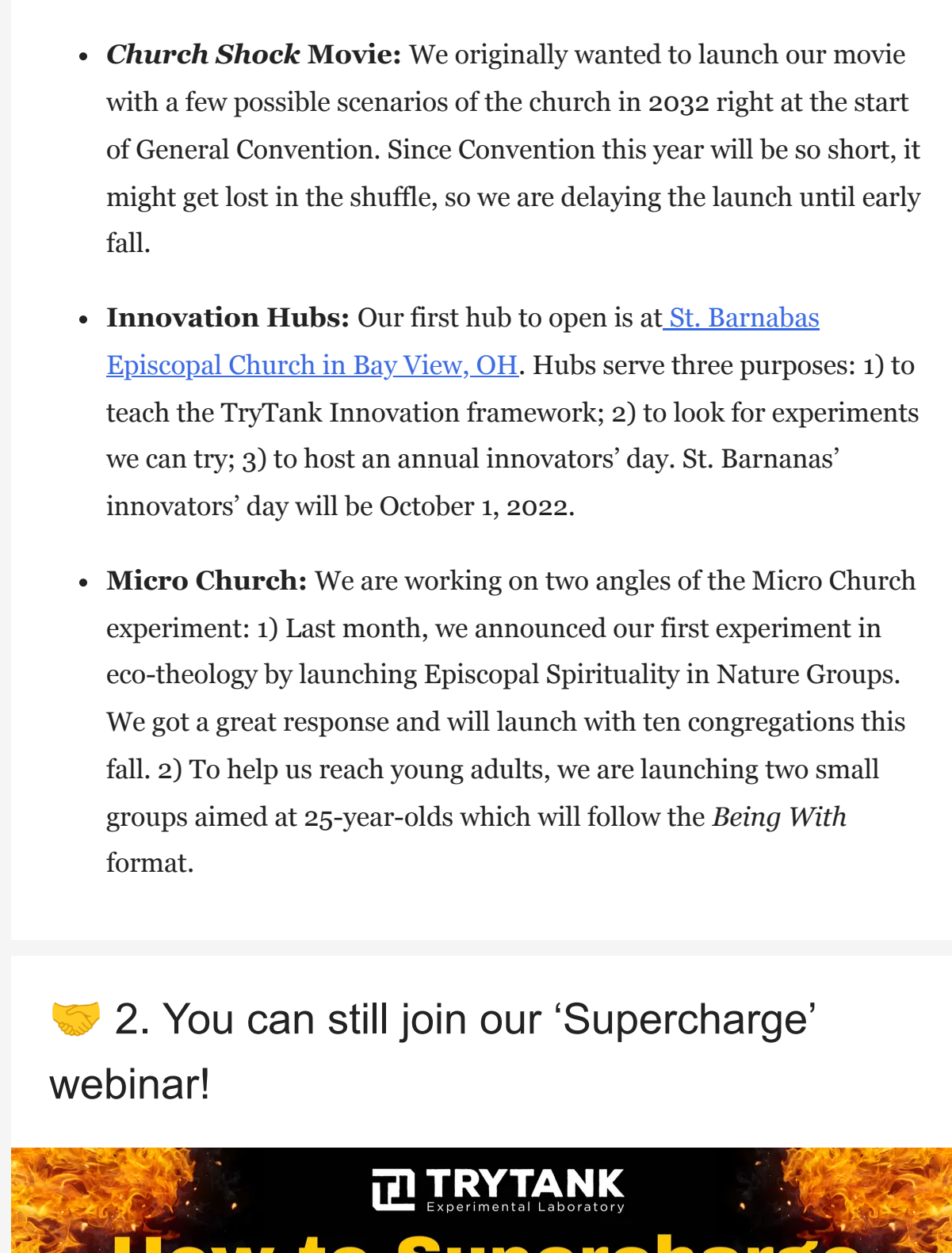
By Rev. Lorenzo Lebrija • Jun 03, 2022
Smart Brevity® count: 6.5 mins... 1689 words

Hi friends! Fr. Lorenzo Lebrija here.

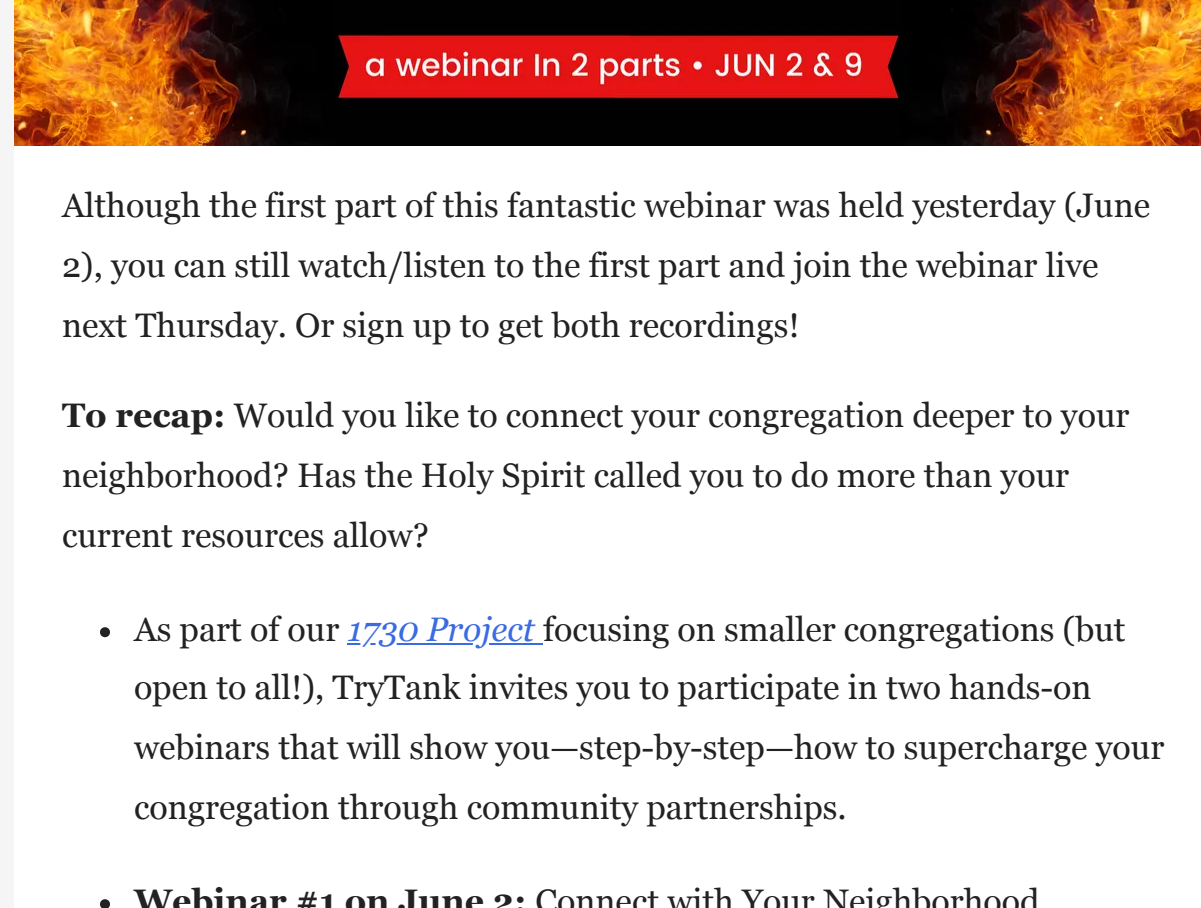
This is our last newsletter until the fall. Like many of you, we're taking some vacation time and I'll be doing the last of my coursework for my D.Min. (yikes!).

- Worry not; if anything urgent comes up, we'll be back in your inbox with a special report.
- Keep up with [TryTank](#) and [me](#) on Facebook this summer.

1. Quick Updates on Some Experiments



2. You can still join our 'Supercharge' webinar!



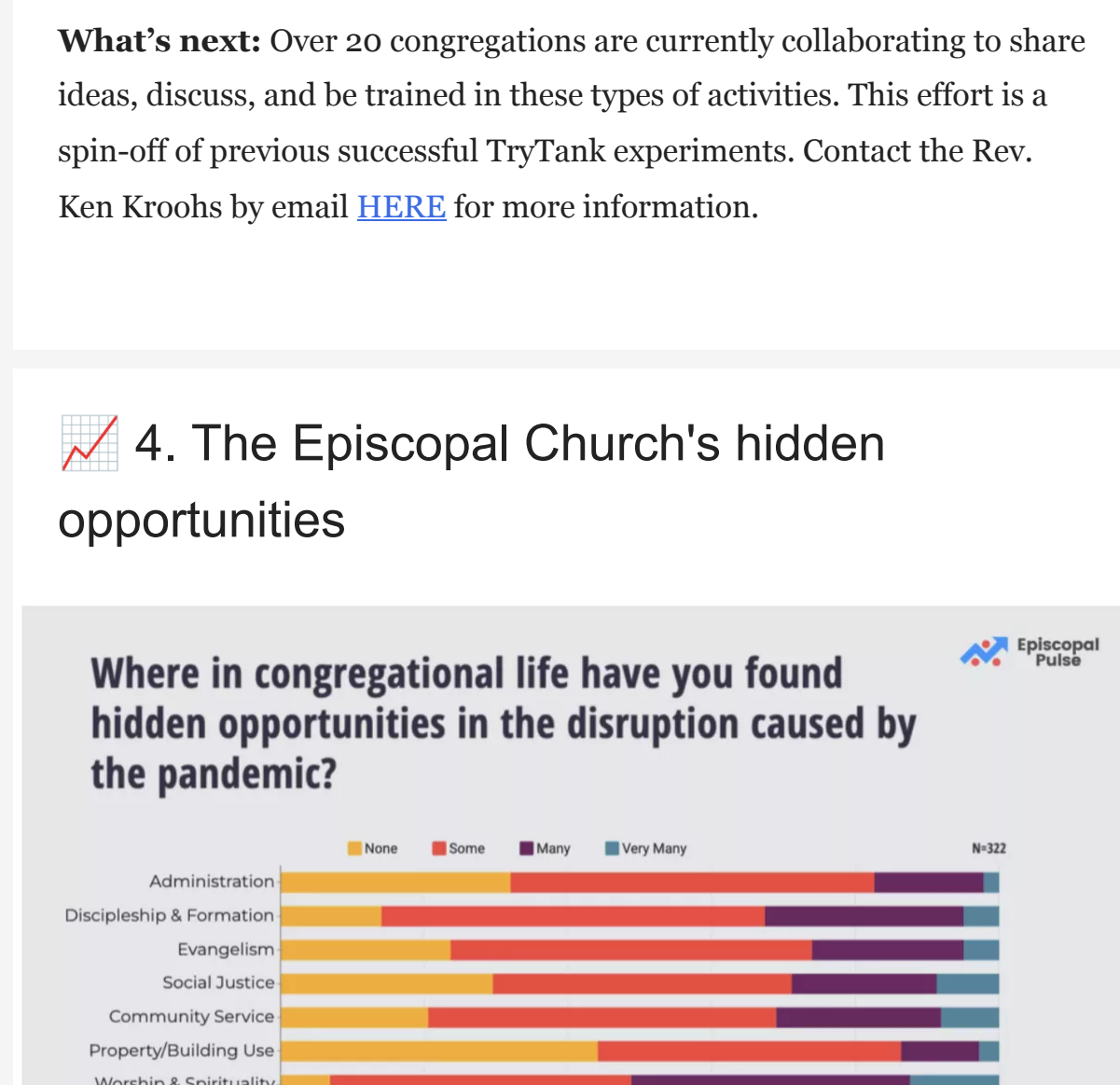
Although the first part of this fantastic webinar was held yesterday (June 2), you can still watch/listen to the first part and join the webinar live next Thursday. Or sign up to get both recordings!

To recap: Would you like to connect your congregation deeper to your neighborhood? Has the Holy Spirit called you to do more than your current resources allow?

- As part of our [1730 Project](#) focusing on smaller congregations (but open to all), TryTank invites you to participate in two hands-on webinars that will show you—step-by-step—how to supercharge your congregation through community partnerships.
- **Webinar #1 on June 2:** Connect with Your Neighborhood Through Community Listening
- **Webinar #2 on June 9:** The Power of Community Partnerships

What's next: You can register today by going to Lifelong Learning at VTS' Eventbrite page [HERE](#).

3. What our Evangelism experiments have taught us



The big picture: TryTank has completed four phases of an experiment dealing with evangelism. We've learned that there are many ways to invite people to your church to start a relationship.

Go deeper: Here are some simple ways to get to know your neighbors with very little time and money:

- Ask for Father's Day (etc.) prayers, include them in your service, then tell people you included their prayer.
- Have an ice cream social with water games (at least 30-60 minutes). Announce it as a "meet your neighbors" event (people are looking for relationships).
- Offer a monthly music jam session. Amateur musicians love to jam, your church has great acoustics, and you may gain a choir member.
- Organize a mini-golf tournament. Invite parents and the local independent living retirement community.
- Offer a quiet prayer time (maybe a labyrinth walk) after the next mass shooting event (it's a sad reality that it will happen again).
- Prepare for a Blessing of the Animals in the fall – early efforts produce more success.

What's next: Over 20 congregations are currently collaborating to share ideas, discuss, and be trained in these types of activities. This effort is a spin-off of previous successful TryTank experiments. Contact the Rev. Ken Kroohs by email [HERE](#) for more information.

4. The Episcopal Church's hidden opportunities



Here's an update from the Rev. Ken Howard, experiment manager for our Episcopal Pulse experiment. Here's his note:

“As you may know, FaithX is working with [TryTank](#) on a 'proof-of-concept' experiment called [Episcopal Pulse](#), which aims to keep a finger on the pulse of The Episcopal Church through weekly rapid-response micro surveys.

By the numbers: Our most recent micro survey (#16), completed last Friday, asked this question:

- **Where in congregational life have you found hidden opportunities in the disruption caused by the pandemic?**

The bottom line: Most Episcopalians see few hidden opportunities in the disruption caused by the pandemic. In all but one area, most respondents (by at least a two-to-one margin) said they had found few hidden opportunities in the disruption caused by the pandemic. The exception was Worship and Spirituality, for which a bare majority of respondents said they had found “many” or “very many” hidden opportunities in the pandemic disruption.

Our thought bubble: Personally, I find these results disheartening but not surprising, except in their starkness. There are several ways we can interpret these findings.

Entrepreneurial Insight? Over the last decade or so, business and nonprofit sectors have come to the understanding that disruptions contain hidden opportunities.

- The key to success in an uncertain and rapidly moving terrain is recognizing and harvesting those opportunities.
- Could the vast majority of church leaders lack the ability (or interest) to see past their investment in prevailing paradigms and perceive disruption-based opportunities (aka Paradigm blindness)?

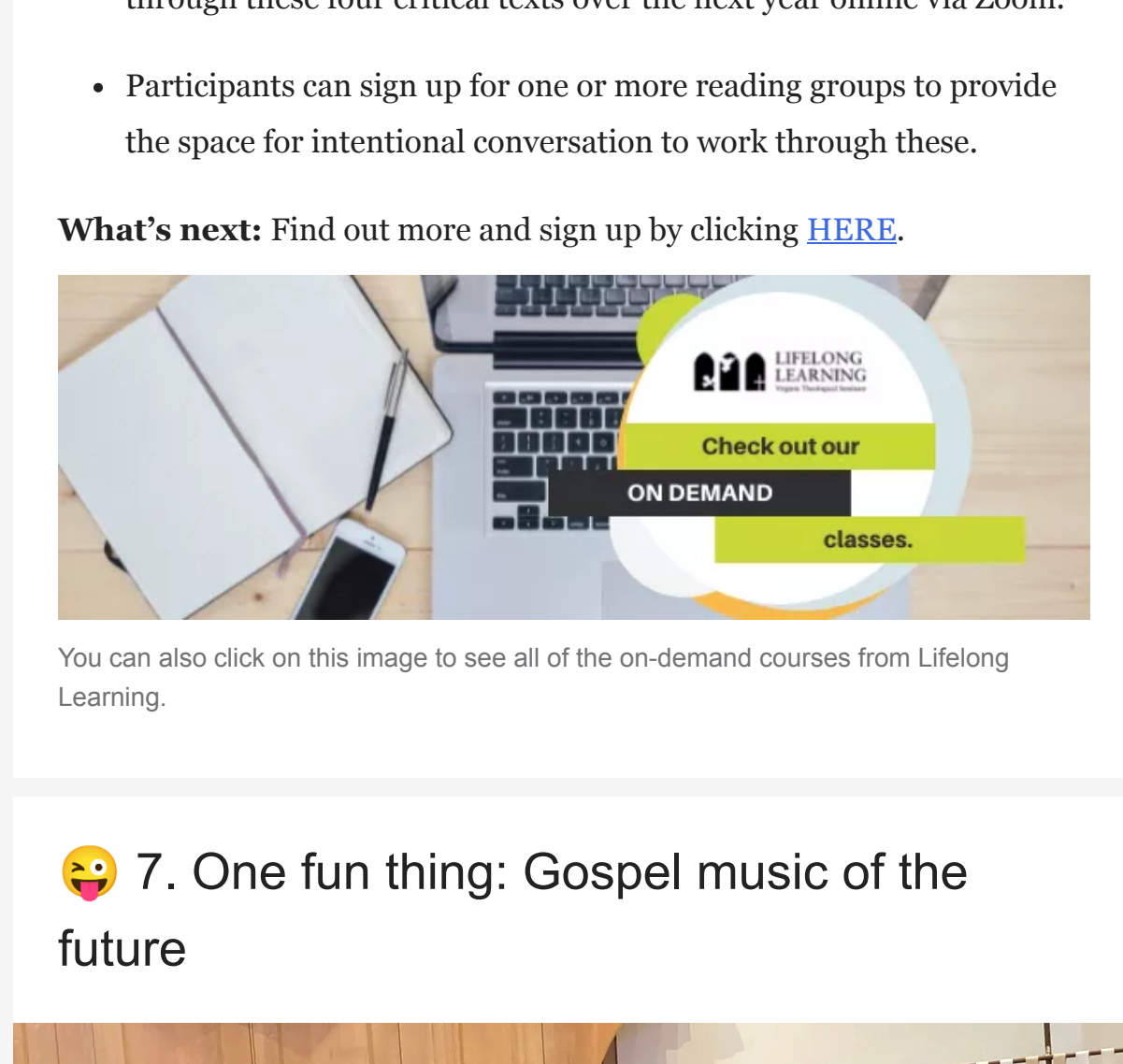
Adaptive Leadership? Could it be that too many church leaders (and their congregations) can see the opportunities presented by disruption but lack the adaptive capacity to engage them?

Spirit of Innovation? Could it be that too many church leaders (and their congregations) lack sufficient outside-the-box thinking to innovate new ways of being and doing church?

Formation? Could our ministry discernment and theological education processes be weeding out too many candidates that possess the above qualities?*

What's next: From time to time, we need to replenish our respondent pool for the micro surveys. Do you know an Episcopalian who might be interested in being an *Episcopal Pulse* volunteer respondent? Please send them [this registration link](#).

5. You can still apply to start a Spirituality in Nature Group



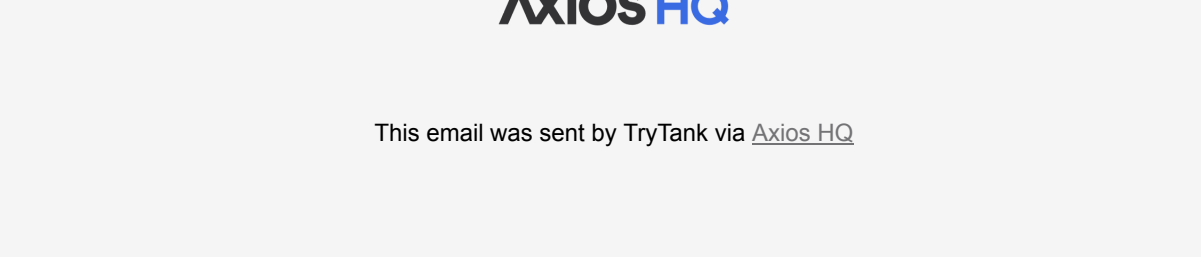
We asked Payton Hoegh, from [the Center for Spirituality in Nature](#), our partner in this experiment, to update us. Here's his note:

“We have received a tremendous response to the announcement of the eco-theology experiment. Episcopal congregations, seminaries, and ministries have been expressing interest in the opportunity to join the pilot cohort. Spirituality in Nature Groups (SINGs) will meet regularly in nature to reawaken wonder and nourish attentive recognition of the way God moves in, through, and with creation.”

What's next: The Center will be accepting applications to participate in this project throughout the summer and will host a leaders' training for the Episcopal SING cohort early in the fall.”

- **Anyone interested in learning more** can find out more [HERE](#) or contact Payton [HERE](#).

5. Are you a content producer? Meet new friends!



Recently, I had a fascinating conversation with Tony Comegys, the director of communications at [All Saints' Episcopal Church in Lakeland, FL](#).

Why it matters: During the pandemic, All Saints went digital. Now that things are at a “somewhat, are-they-really, look-out-for-the-next-variant, ‘new normal,’” they decided to double down on digital content and currently produce about ten hours a week.

Our thought bubble: As we spoke, we wondered what it might look like if our denomination's great content producers got together to show their work to each other and to the church. He loved the idea and wants to meet other content creators. Here's his note:

“I'm interested in connecting with fellow content creators. Let's chat if anyone is interested in video or audio productions, whether you create it, want to use it for your church, or think the idea is interesting.

COVID pushed our church to try many new things, including producing video and audio programming that has received wide attention through social media and great appreciation for our parish. Not only do we plan to continue these productions, our vestry overwhelmingly pushed for an expansion of our offerings and our production capabilities.

Our ultimate goal is to use the resources we've been blessed with to identify needs, create unique productions, market, and distribute those productions to a broad audience regularly.

Building a network of like-minded content creators is a logical step in that process. Perhaps we can help each other reach similar goals!”

If you are interested in connecting with Tony to talk shop, please drop him an email [HERE](#).

6. From Lifelong Learning: Formation Fundamentals

An opportunity to read and discuss influential ministry texts in an online community. The books are:

- Maria Harris, [Fashion Me A People: Curriculum in the Church](#) (206 pages)
- Verna Dozier, [The Dream of God: A Call to Return](#) (128 pages)
- Jemar Tisby, [The Color of Compromise: The Truth About the American Church's Complicity in Racism](#) (256 pages)
- Mark DeVries, [Sustainable Youth Ministry: Why Most Youth Ministry Doesn't Last and What Your Church Can Do About It](#) (225 pages)

Why it matters: Many texts related to ministry can challenge *and* make us better.

- It can be challenging to prioritize reading these books with all the other demands on our plates.
- Lifelong Learning is offering the opportunity to read and work through these four critical texts over the next year online via Zoom.
- Participants can sign up for one or more reading groups to provide the space for intentional conversation to work through these.

What's next: Find out more and sign up by clicking [HERE](#).

You can also click on this image to see all of the on-demand courses from Lifelong Learning.

7. One fun thing: Gospel music of the future

In late May, at the chapel at Virginia Theological Seminary, a production team from California filmed an excellent gospel music concert in 3D and 360 degrees. It's part of a TryTank experiment, of course.

Here, some members of the gospel choir from [the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas in Philadelphia](#) gather for a selfie during a break in filming.

The video should be available in early fall.

Thanks for reading! Have an amazing summer.

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