



Church Innovation Insider

By The Rev. Joshua Barrett Tracey • Oct 07, 2022
Smart Brevity® count: 4 mins... 1060 words

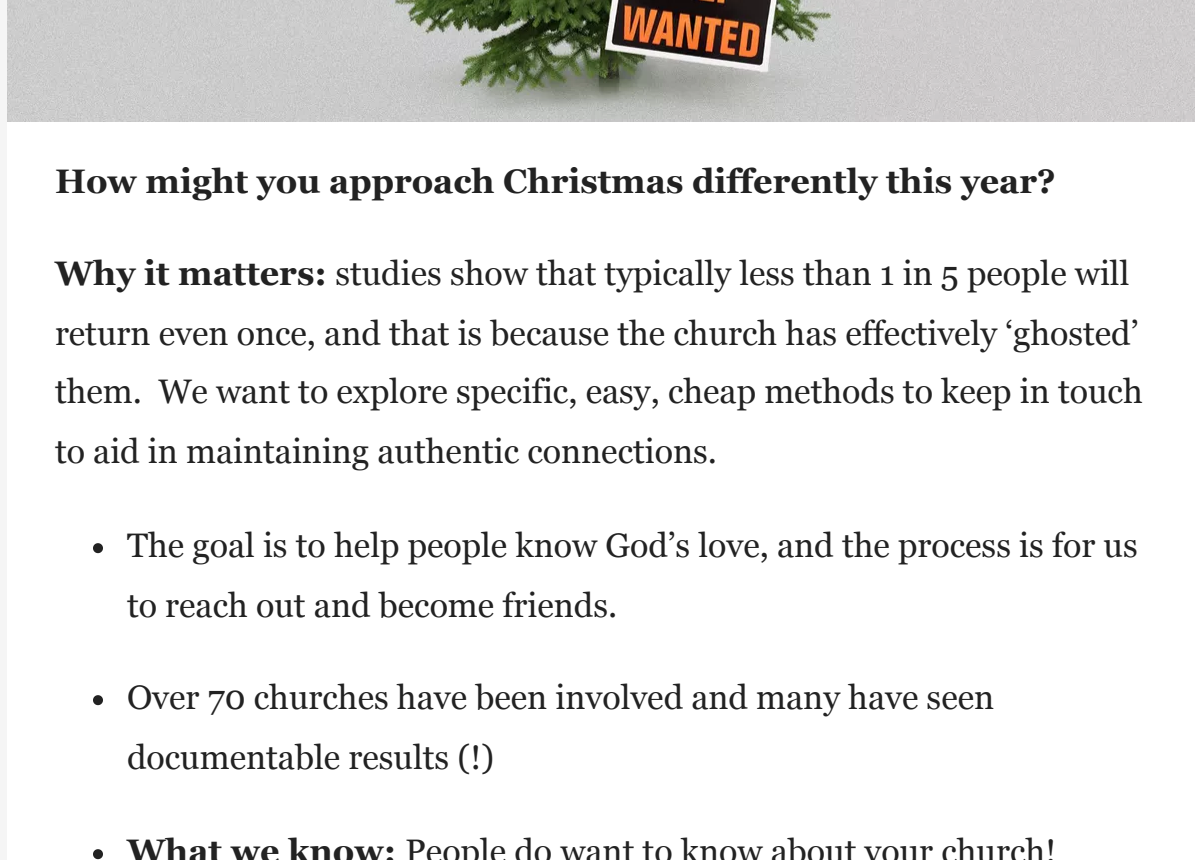
Well, hello! 🌟 We're back! We missed you.

I know, I know, you were probably expecting to see Lorenzo's name. Rest assured Lorenzo and the Lama are doing just fine. My name is Josh and I am the new guy around here. I serve you all as a coordinator for Try Tank. Currently, I live outside of Philadelphia, PA with my husband and our cat, Pecan. She also says hi.

Here are some things to keep an eye out for in this edition:

- 📌 Spirituality in Nature groups have gained much enthusiasm
- 📌 Deep listening with young adults uncovers surprising longings for community and connection in a spiritual context
- 📌 We ask: can we do campus ministry differently?
- 📌 Grab your popcorn! A video produced by Try Tank is coming! 🍿

🎄 1. Christmas Evangelism



How might you approach Christmas differently this year?

Why it matters: studies show that typically less than 1 in 5 people will return even once, and that is because the church has effectively 'ghosted' them. We want to explore specific, easy, cheap methods to keep in touch to aid in maintaining authentic connections.

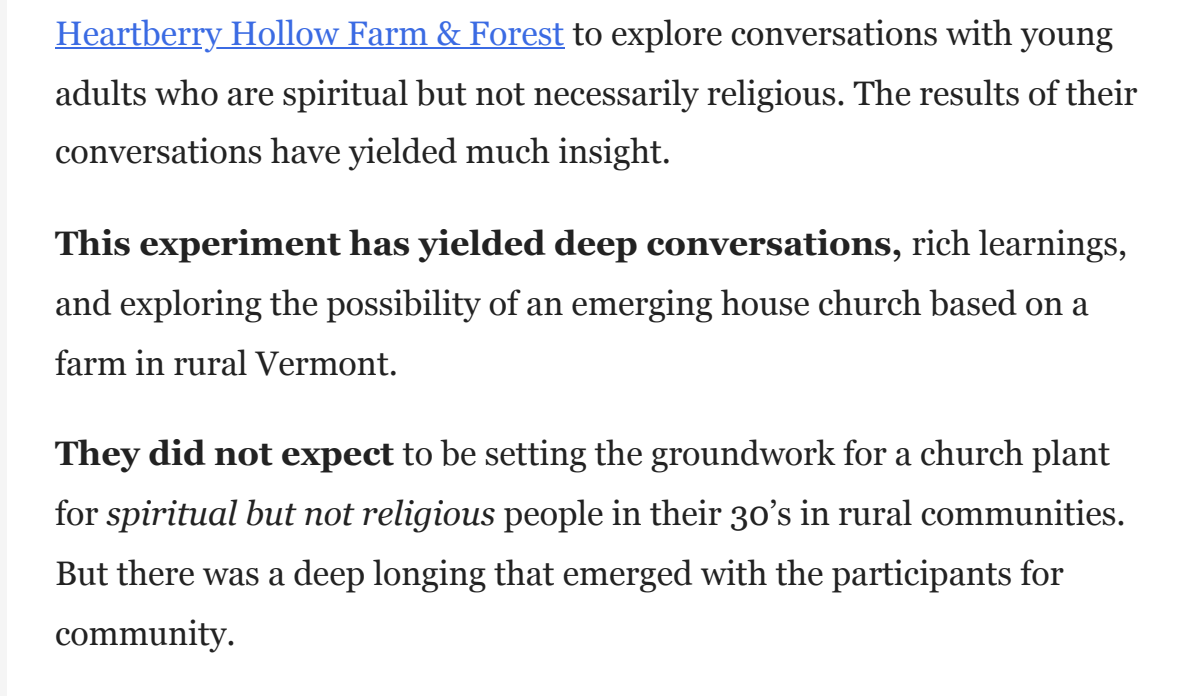
- The goal is to help people know God's love, and the process is for us to reach out and become friends.
- Over 70 churches have been involved and many have seen documentable results (!)

- **What we know:** People do want to know about your church!

The bottom line: The goal is not to increase Christmas attendance – although that is likely to happen. The goal is to help people know God's love more effectively through creative thinking, teamwork, and relationship building.

A new series is beginning soon. You can find more information and a registration link at: www.KroohsNC.com/Christmas-2022

🙏 2. Exploring Spirituality with Young Adults



We have partnered with [The Retreat House](#) and The Rev. Rachel Feild at [Heartberry Hollow Farm & Forest](#) to explore conversations with young adults who are spiritual but not necessarily religious. The results of their conversations have yielded much insight.

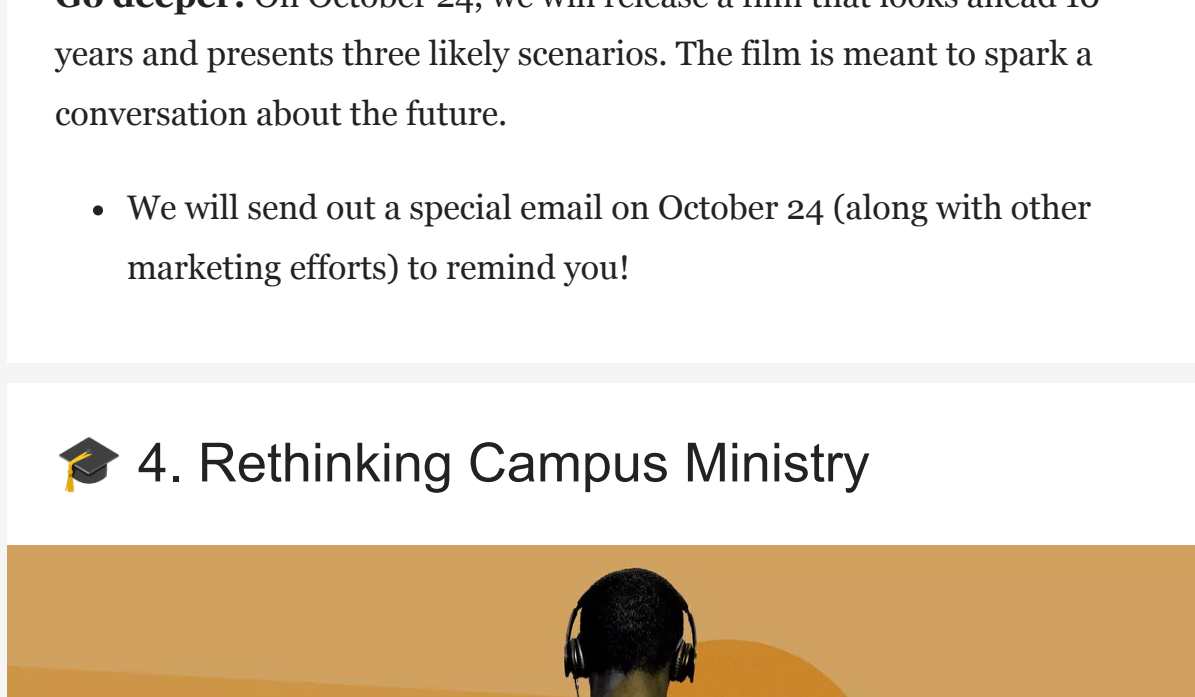
This experiment has yielded deep conversations, rich learnings, and exploring the possibility of an emerging house church based on a farm in rural Vermont.

They did not expect to be setting the groundwork for a church plant for *spiritual but not religious* people in their 30's in rural communities. But there was a deep longing that emerged with the participants for community.

Go deeper: Rachel and the experiment team have compiled some helpful reference tools that emerged from their own experience in this important work. Both will be shared later this fall. *Stay excited!*

- 🎧 Podcast conversation
- 📖 A toolkit guide to help you incarnate this process in your own context

🎬 3. Coming: "The (possible) Future of the Church"



The opening shot of TryTank's new film.

Mark your calendar for October 24, when TryTank will present three possible scenarios for the church's future.

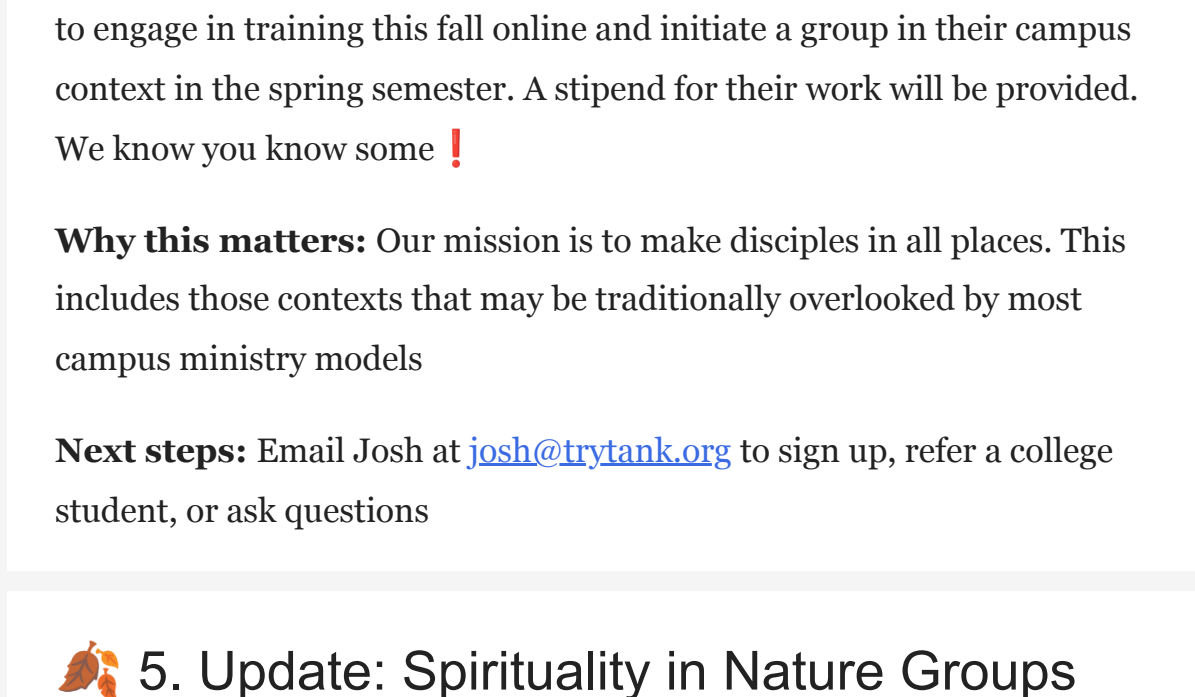
Why it matters: As an experimental laboratory, TryTank uses foresight to determine possible scenarios of the future church.

- This way, we can be on the lookout for opportunities. This is how we determine where to experiment.

Go deeper: On October 24, we will release a film that looks ahead 10 years and presents three likely scenarios. The film is meant to spark a conversation about the future.

- We will send out a special email on October 24 (along with other marketing efforts) to remind you!

🎓 4. Rethinking Campus Ministry



What if we changed the way we think about ministry to young adults?

The big picture: In the United States

- there are 4,000+ degree-granting institutions.
- 2,800 are four-year colleges
- 1,500 are two-year colleges.

By the numbers: Total enrollment is over 15 million students

- [Episcopal Asset Map](#) lists only 284 official connections to campuses.
- Not every one of these has a dedicated chaplain
- What if a campus presence looked different than before?

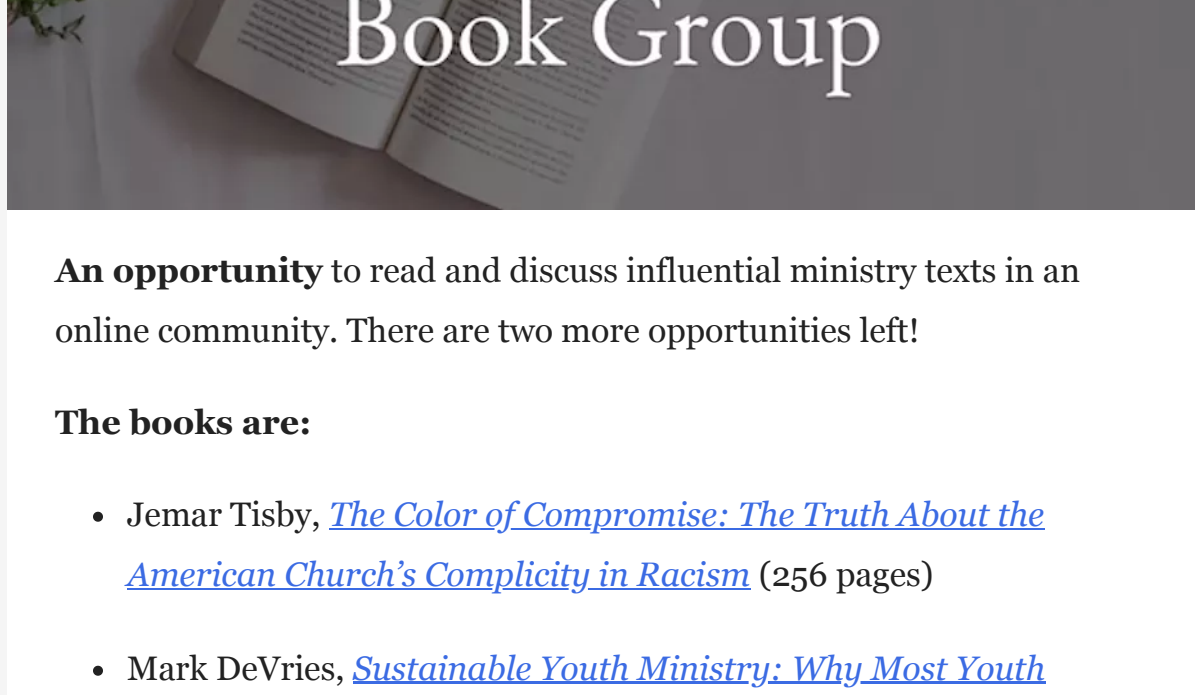
What we are exploring: Micro-church ministry that is based on small groups. Student-led. Exploring a spiritually gracious new method called: ["Being With"](#) and training young adult leaders in this process.

What we are looking for: college-aged students who would be willing to engage in training this fall online and initiate a group in their campus context in the spring semester. A stipend for their work will be provided. We know you know some !

Why this matters: Our mission is to make disciples in all places. This includes those contexts that may be traditionally overlooked by most campus ministry models

Next steps: Email Josh at josh@trytank.org to sign up, refer a college student, or ask questions

🌿 5. Update: Spirituality in Nature Groups



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

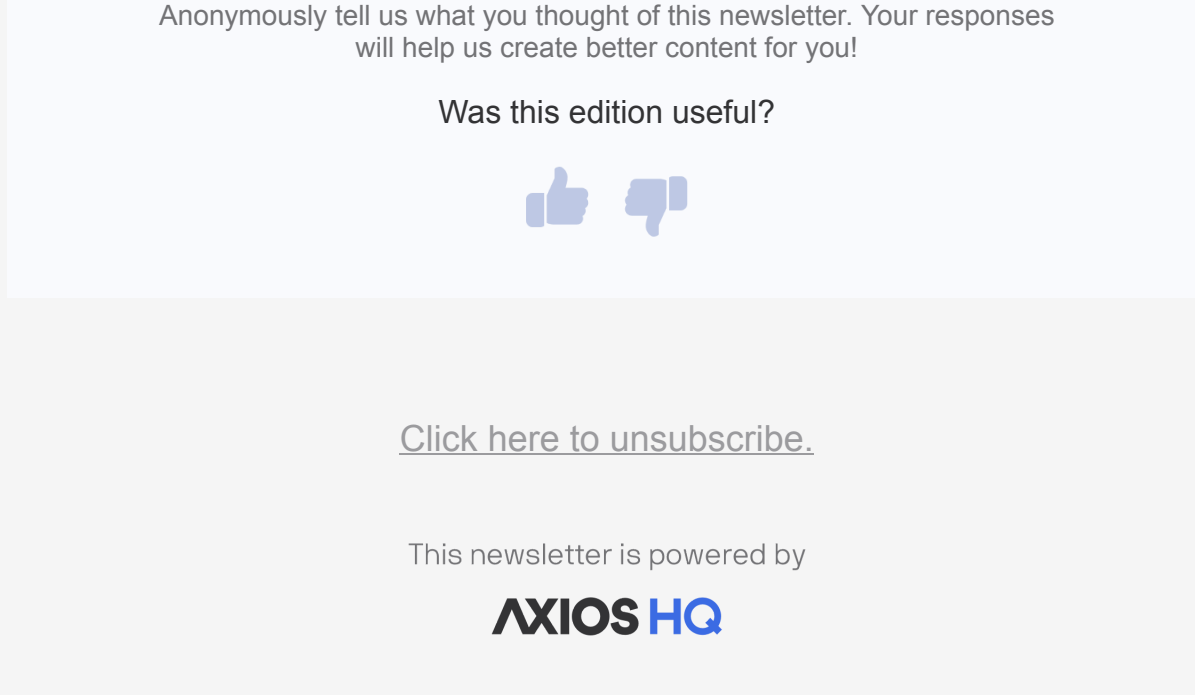
Here's his note: "We have received a tremendous response to the announcement of the eco-theology experiment. 10 selected groups, ranging from Episcopal congregations, seminaries, and ministries joined the pilot cohort. There is so clearly a hunger for spiritual formation in nature and we are excited to see these groups hoping to engage this work - with intention and creativity - connecting spirituality in nature to religious education."

What's next: Moving forward, they are training leaders to form and lead groups in their own contexts. *Stay excited!*

Go deeper:

- [Spirituality in Nature: An Episcopal Tradition](#)
- [Episcopal SiNG Program Overview](#)

📖 6. From Lifelong Learning: Formation Fundamentals



An opportunity to read and discuss influential ministry texts in an online community. There are two more opportunities left!

The books are:

- 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](#).

If you have any new ideas, questions, wonderings, imaginings, or a saint mystically appeared to you in a dream about the future of the church, please feel free to get in touch. I'd be thrilled to listen: josh@trytank.org

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