



Church Innovation Insider

By The Rev. Joshua Barrett Tracey • Nov 14, 2022
Smart Brevity™ count: 5 mins... 1321 words

Well, hello! 🌟 Happy Mid-November!

We hope that you have successfully recovered from the daylight savings switch 🌞

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

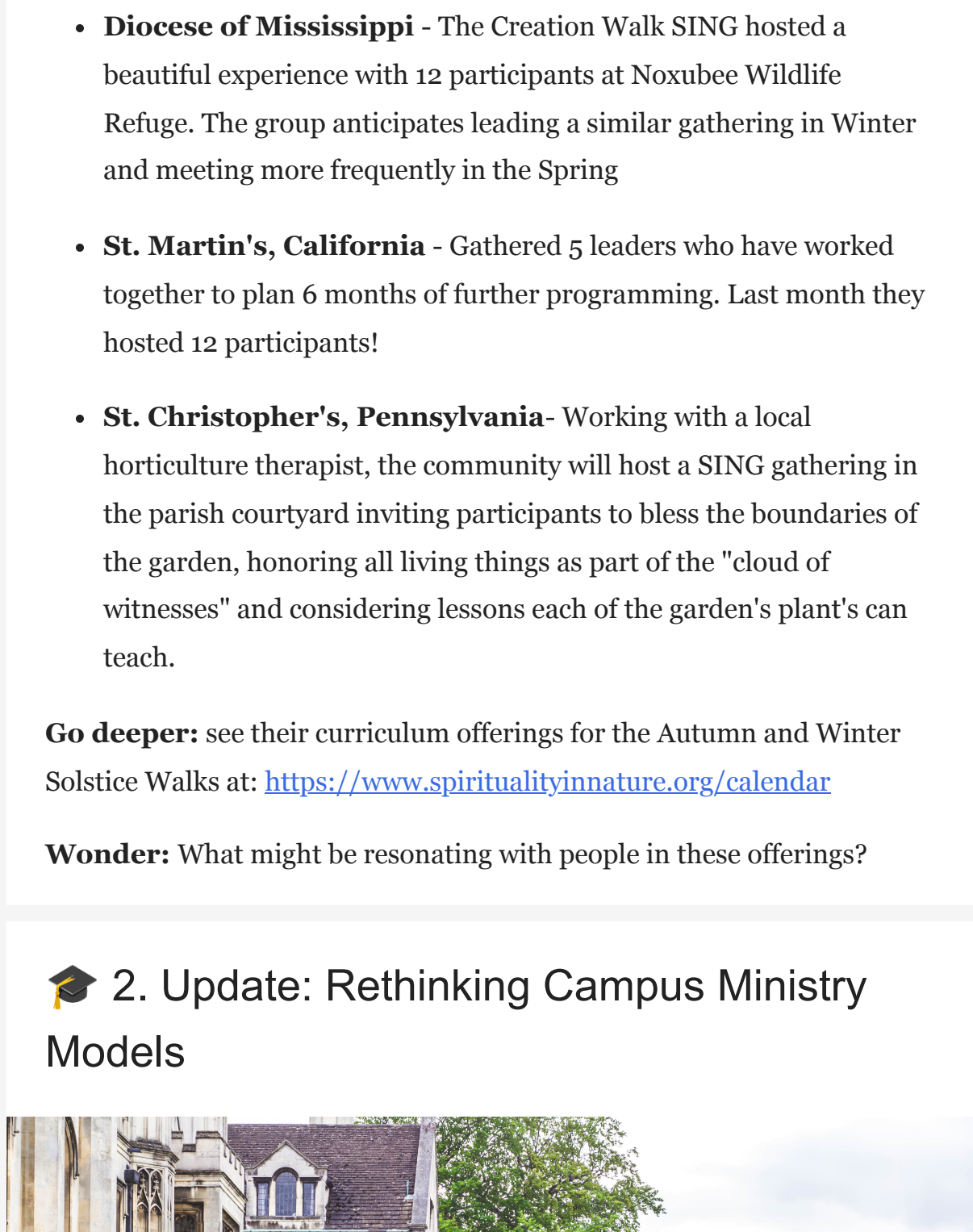
📌 Innovative forms of faithful gathering gain traction

📌 Small-group campus ministry model sparks wide interest

📌 TryTank released a video sparking conversation across the church

📌 A Lama-tastic check-in by Jr

🌿 1. Update: Spirituality in Nature Groups



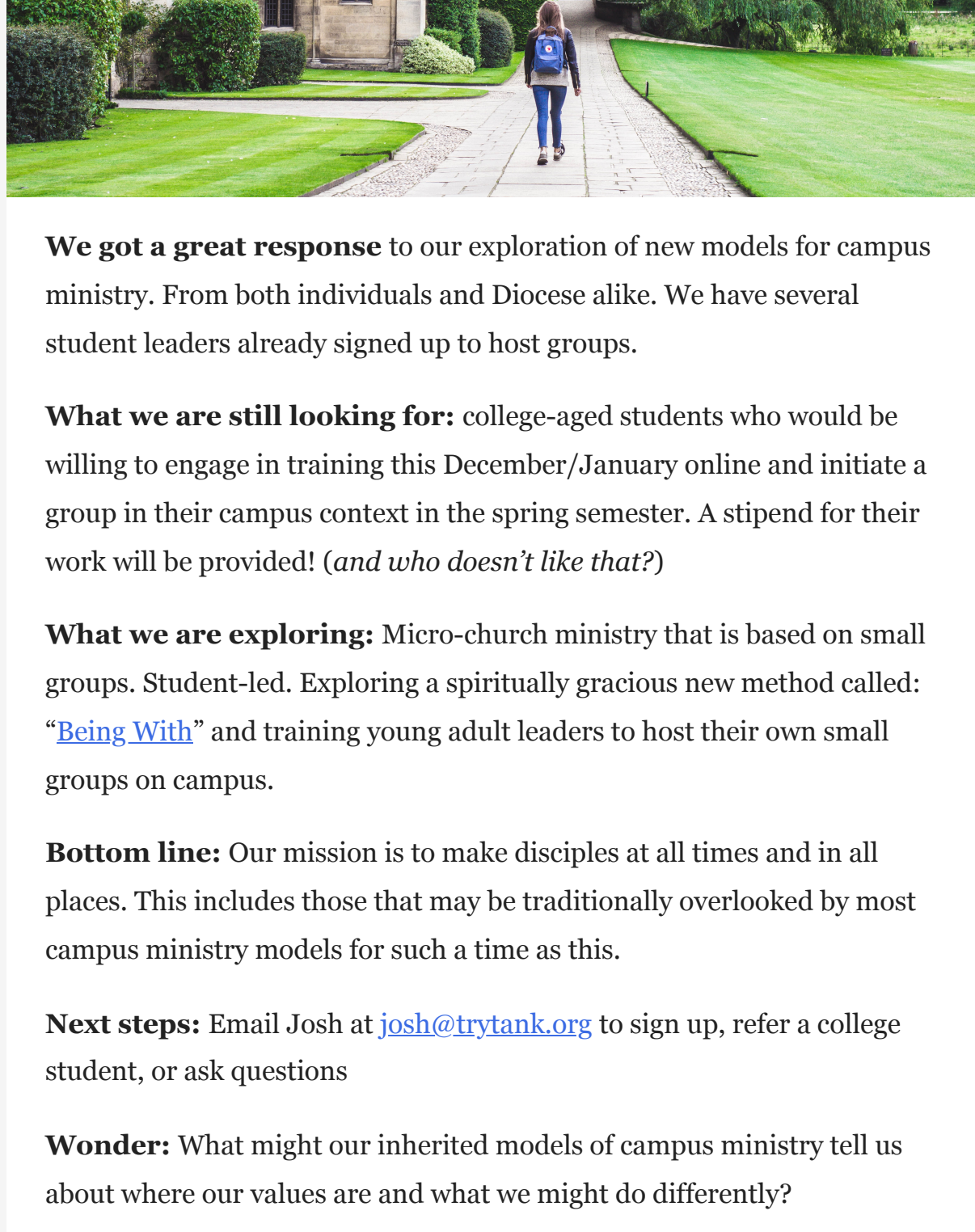
What they're saying: The ECo (Episcopal Cohort) SINGS have been offering some exciting opportunities to engage in and have some wonderful plans for the future. **Payton Hoegh**, our partner in this experiment from [the Center for Spirituality in Nature](#) is excited about how much energy these groups are bringing! Here are some examples:

- **CultivateVTS, Virginia** - Following the successful "Quiet Day" gathering with over a dozen students, the Cultivate team is planning upcoming SING offerings.
- **Diocese of Mississippi** - The Creation Walk SING hosted a beautiful experience with 12 participants at Noxubee Wildlife Refuge. The group anticipates leading a similar gathering in Winter and meeting more frequently in the Spring
- **St. Martin's, California** - Gathered 5 leaders who have worked together to plan 6 months of further programming. Last month they hosted 12 participants!
- **St. Christopher's, Pennsylvania**- Working with a local horticulture therapist, the community will host a SING gathering in the parish courtyard inviting participants to bless the boundaries of the garden, honoring all living things as part of the "cloud of witnesses" and considering lessons each of the garden's plant's can teach.

Go deeper: see their curriculum offerings for the Autumn and Winter Solstice Walks at: <https://www.spiritualityinnature.org/calendar>

Wonder: What might be resonating with people in these offerings?

🎓 2. Update: Rethinking Campus Ministry Models



We got a great response to our exploration of new models for campus ministry. From both individuals and Diocese alike. We have several student leaders already signed up to host groups.

What we are still looking for: college-aged students who would be willing to engage in training this December/January online and initiate a group in their campus context in the spring semester. A stipend for their work will be provided! (*and who doesn't like that?*)

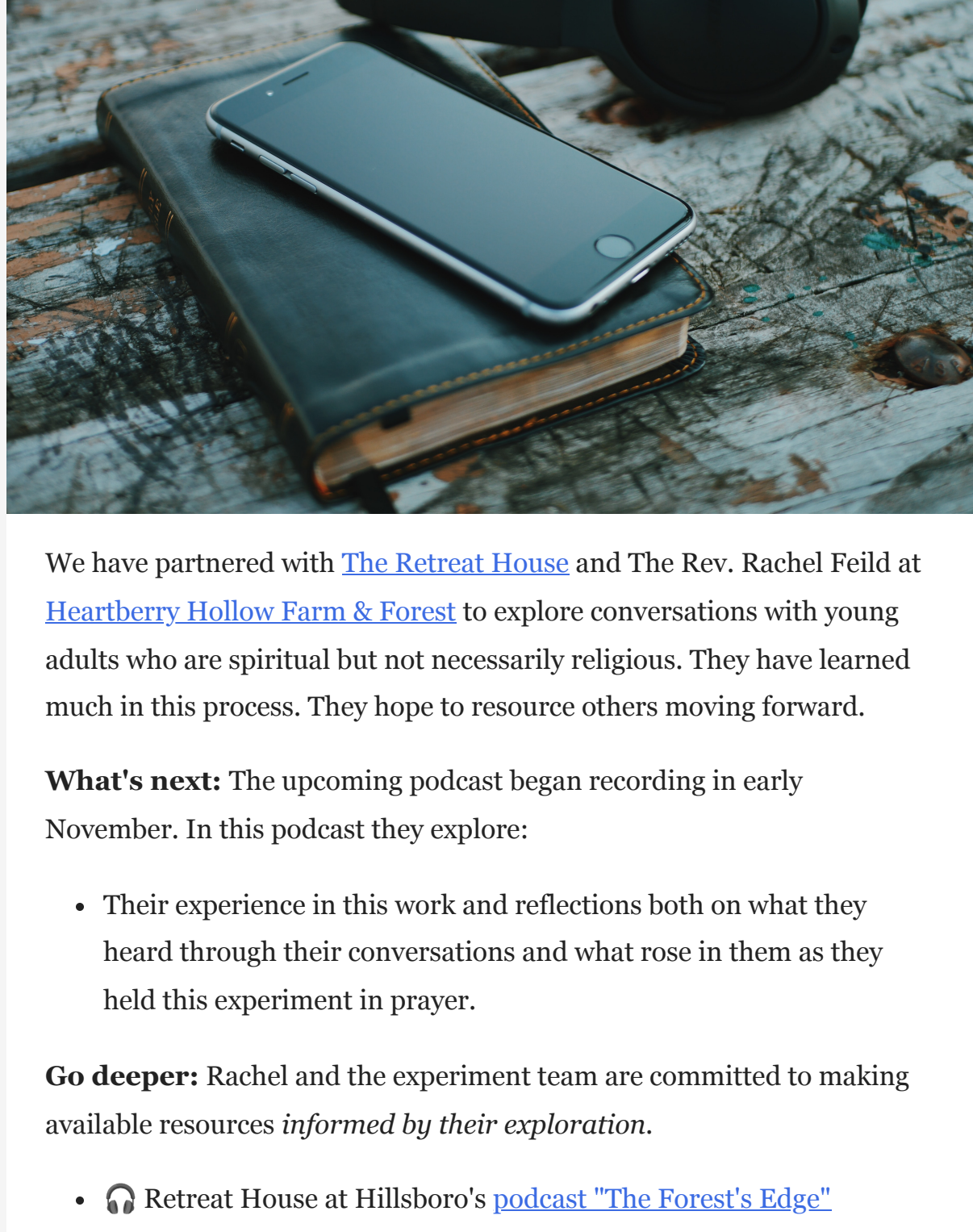
What we are exploring: Micro-church ministry that is based on small groups. Student-led. Exploring a spiritually gracious new method called: "[Being With](#)" and training young adult leaders to host their own small groups on campus.

Bottom line: Our mission is to make disciples at all times and in all places. This includes those that may be traditionally overlooked by most campus ministry models for such a time as this.

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

Wonder: What might our inherited models of campus ministry tell us about where our values are and what we might do differently?

🙏 3. Update: Exploring Spirituality with Young Adults



We have partnered with [The Retreat House](#) and The Rev. Rachel Feild at [Hearberry Hollow Farm & Forest](#) to explore conversations with young adults who are spiritual but not necessarily religious. They have learned much in this process. They hope to resource others moving forward.

What's next: The upcoming podcast began recording in early November. In this podcast they explore:

- Their experience in this work and reflections both on what they heard through their conversations and what rose in them as they held this experiment in prayer.

Go deeper: Rachel and the experiment team are committed to making available resources *informed by their exploration*.

- 🎧 Retreat House at Hillsboro's [podcast "The Forest's Edge"](#) (available on Spotify) *The episode will be released around Thanksgiving!*
- 📁 [this toolkit](#) was prepared by the team!

Wonder: how might we be as a church informed by these insights?

✝️ 4. La Misa Communities



TryTank is beginning to explore what it looks like to gather worshipping communities of disciples in new and innovative ways

La Misa has 4 congregations engaged in the experiment that worship in English. Each one of them has had a unique and interesting experience with this experiment.

By the numbers:

- **1 very successful congregation** meets regularly and has effectively re-engaged members and created new connections with others (*pictured above*)
- **2 other congregations** have struggled to connect with the community in the planting of this new worship experience.
- **a fourth community** is very promising and is getting ready to launch its experiment in January 2023

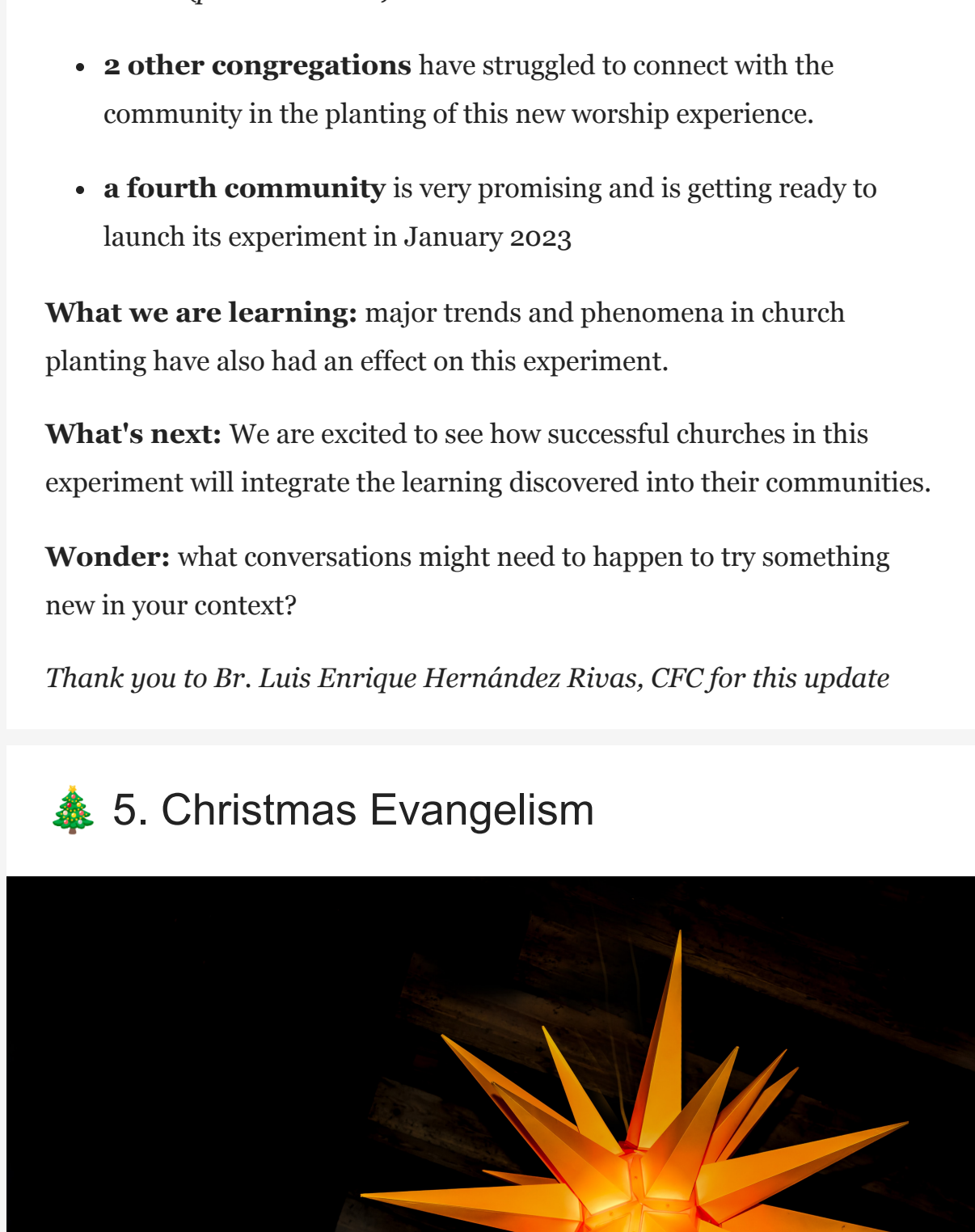
What we are learning: major trends and phenomena in church planting have also had an effect on this experiment.

What's next: We are excited to see how successful churches in this experiment will integrate the learning discovered into their communities.

Wonder: what conversations might need to happen to try something new in your context?

Thank you to Br. Luis Enrique Hernández Rivas, CFC for this update

🎄 5. Christmas Evangelism



How do you prepare to engage and connect with those who visit for Christmas?

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.

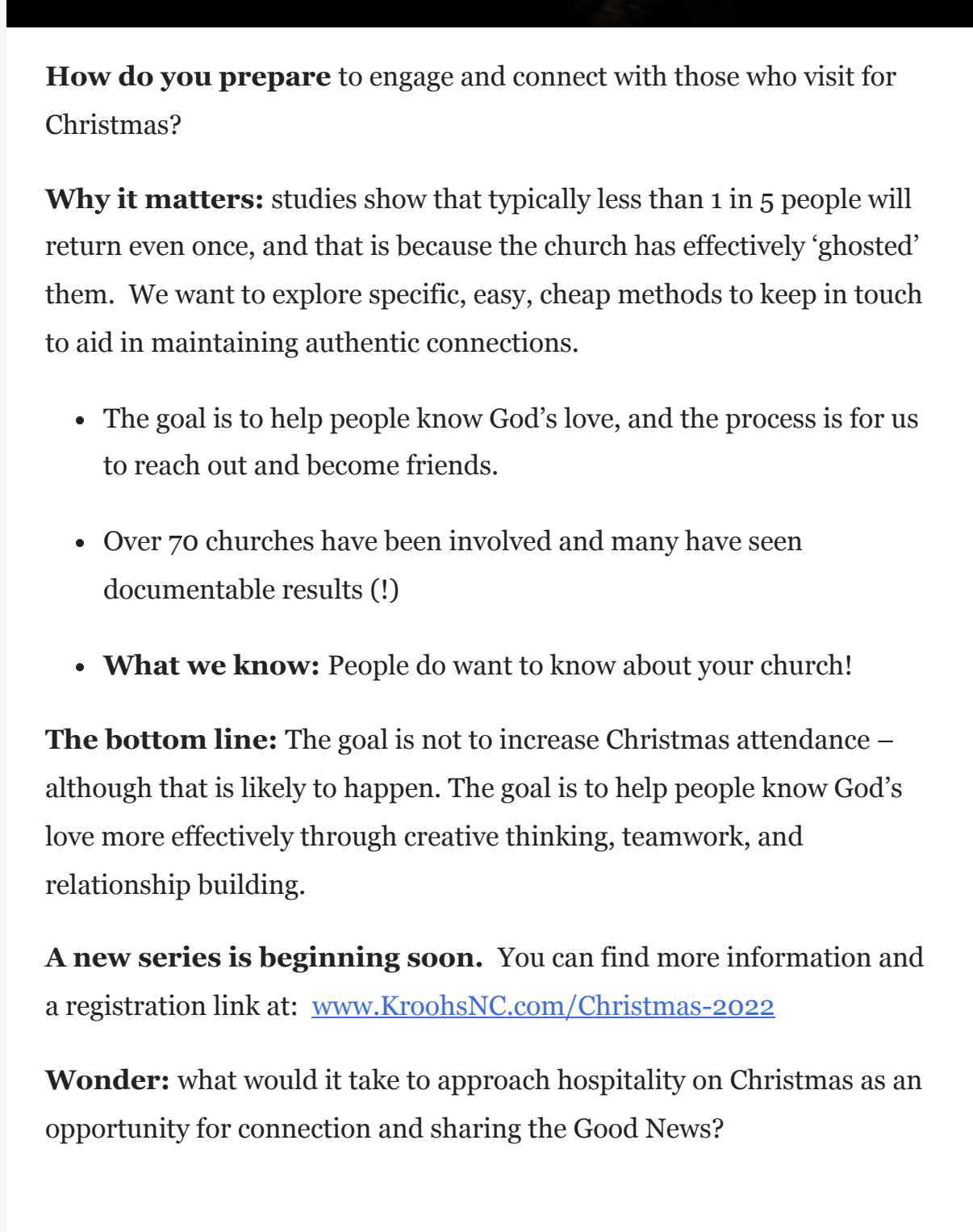
- The goal is to help people know God's love, and the process is for us to reach out and become friends.
- Over 70 churches have been involved and many have seen documentable results (!)
- **What we know:** People do want to know about your church!

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

Wonder: what would it take to approach hospitality on Christmas as an opportunity for connection and sharing the Good News?

📺 6. TryTank Video: “The (possible) Future of the Church”



The opening shot of TryTank's new film.

TryTank has released a short documentary film about what the church might be like in 10 years.

- It's titled "*The (possible) Future of the Church.*"

Why it matters: While it is impossible to predict the future, strategic foresight allows us to look at plausible future scenarios. This way, leaders can plan with more insight into the future.

- TryTank's executive director, the Rev. Lorenzo Lebrija, was trained as a foresight strategist (futurist) at the Institute for the Future in Palo Alto, CA.

Go deeper: The 10-minute film presents three church scenarios in 2032. They are:

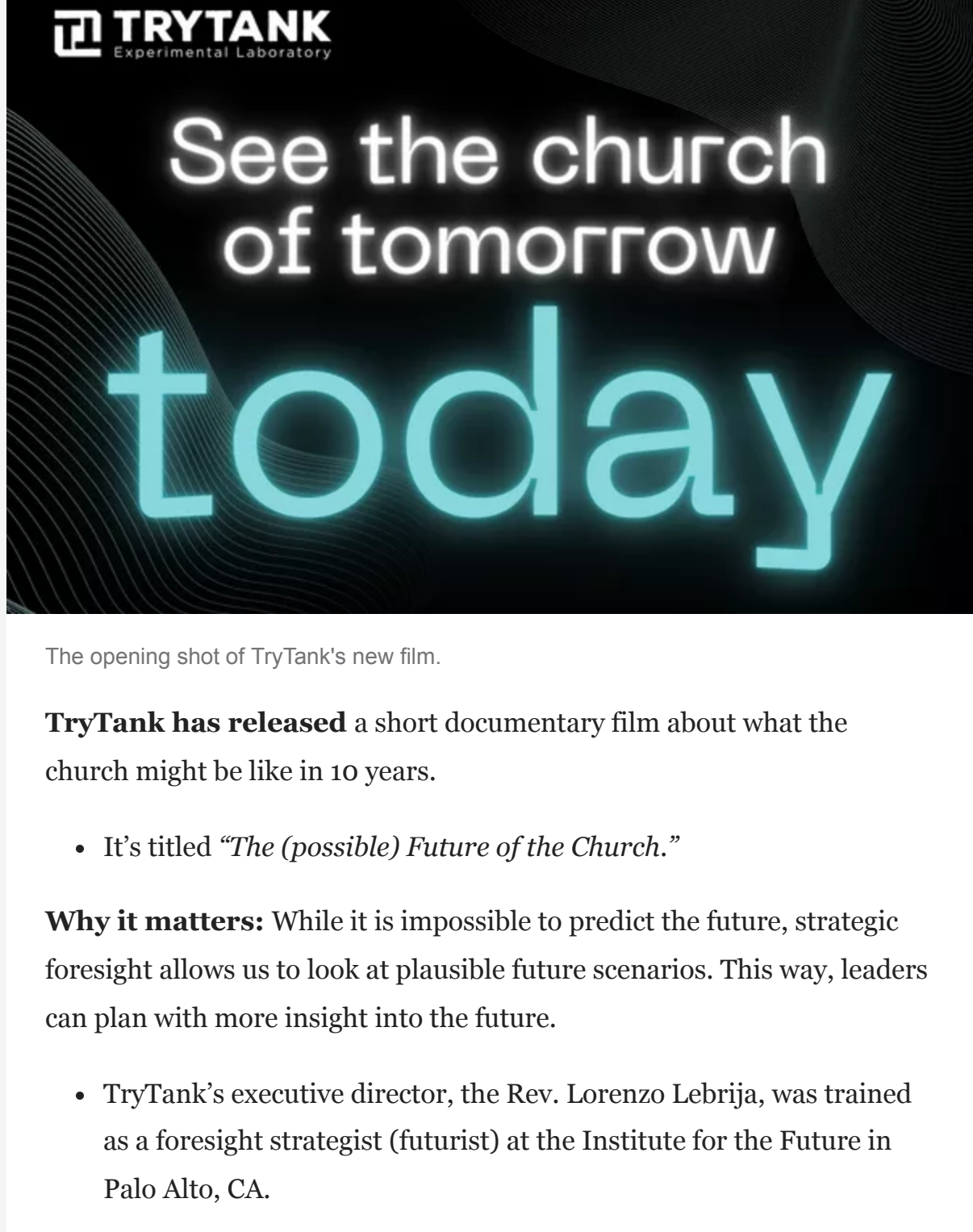
- *Distributed church*
- *Authentic do-it-yourself spirituality*
- *Blended reality experiences*

The bottom line: “Our aim is for this film to act as a catalyst for conversation,” says Rev. Lebrija. “We must have honest conversations about the church's future now.”

The new film is available on TryTank's website: www.TryTank.org.

Wonder: what sort of reaction did you have to what the discussed?

📺 7. From Lifelong Learning: Forma Conference 2023



An opportunity for Christian educators to learn and network, while encouraging them in their ministry and work.

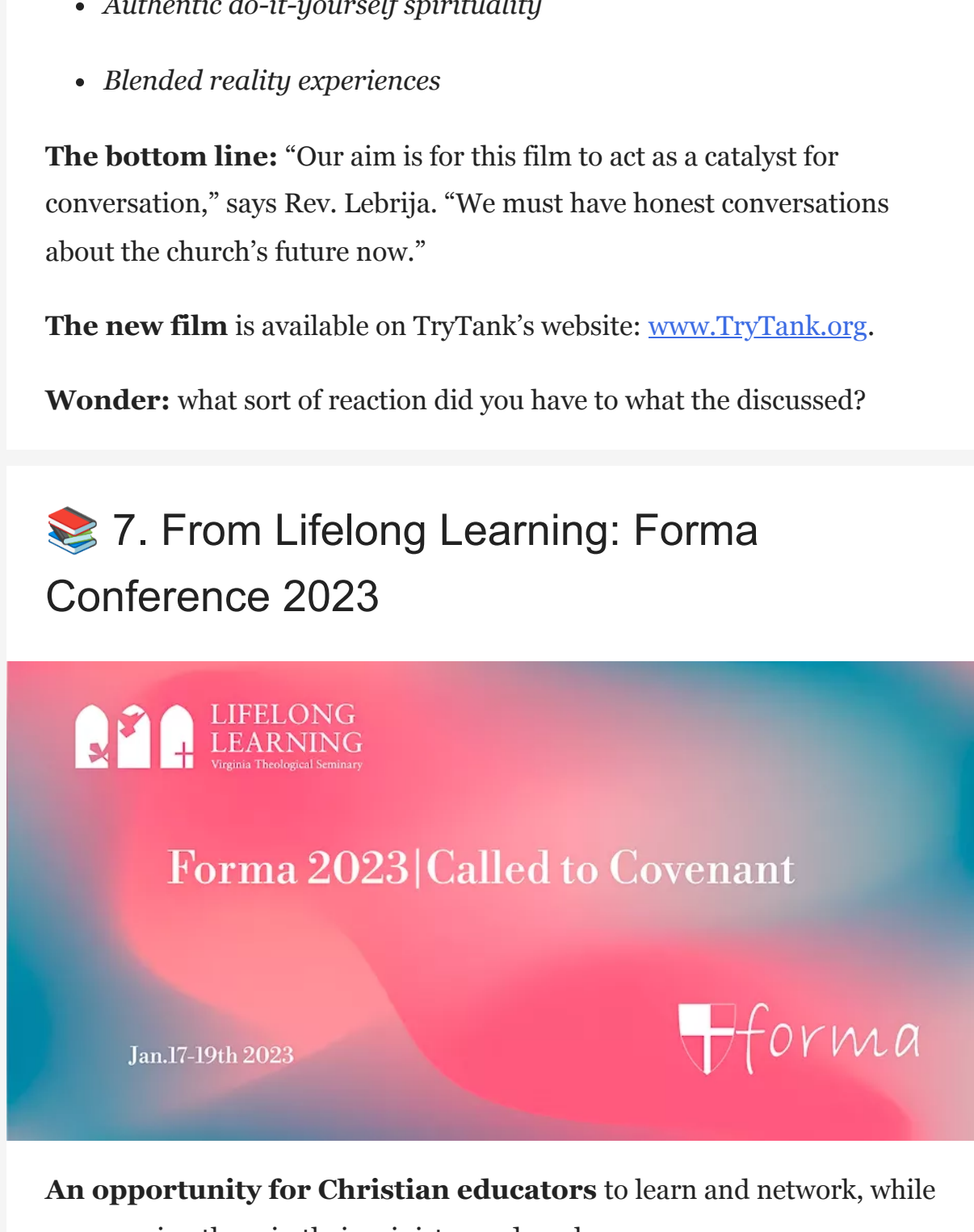
The 2023 Forma Conference will be held in person on campus at Virginia Theological Seminary, January 17th-19th 2023.

Go deeper: Details, accommodations, and registration can be found at [this link here](#)

Why it matters: coming together as disciples who make disciples, it is important to be encouraged and resourced by peers in our ministry. “*As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another*” (Proverbs 27:17)

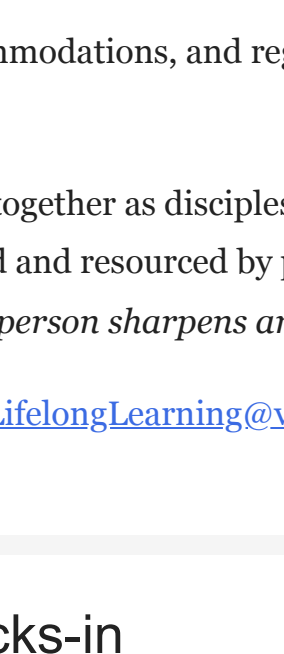
Have questions? Email LifelongLearning@vts.edu or visit the [Forma website](#)

🦙 8. Lama Checks-in



Jr. and Lorenzo arrive at one of their many appointments and events in the UK and Europe on their most recent trip overseas. Jr. wanted to make sure you knew he was being the best emotional support lama he could be.

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



Feedback

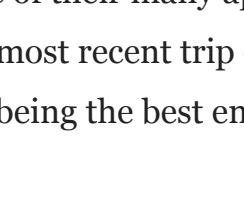
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