



Church Innovation Insider

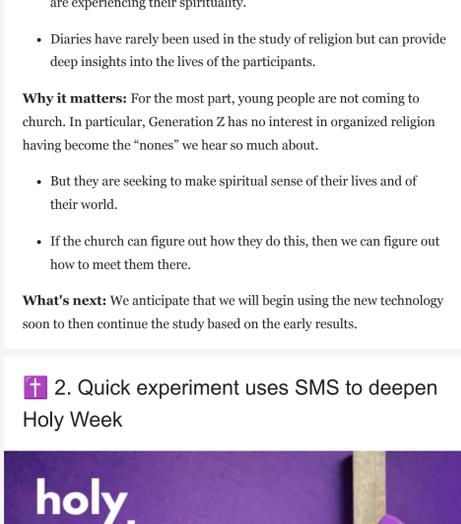
By Rev. Lorenzo Lebrija • Apr 08, 2022
 Smart Brevity® count: 6.5 mins... 1775 words

Hi friends! Fr. Lorenzo Lebrija here.

I recently was introduced to this prayer which is becoming my go-to before every meeting I have. It's called, *Help Me Listen* from the book "[Guerrillas of Grace](#)":

O Holy One, I hear and say so many words, yet yours is the word I need. Speak now, and help me listen; and if what I hear is silence, let it quiet me, let it disturb me, let it touch my need, let it break my pride, let it shrink my certainties, let it enlarge my wonder. (h/t [Rev. Jessie](#))

🔥 1 big thing: Doubling down on Generation Z



What's new: One of TryTank's strategic priorities for this year has been figuring out how the church can best engage with members of Generation Z.

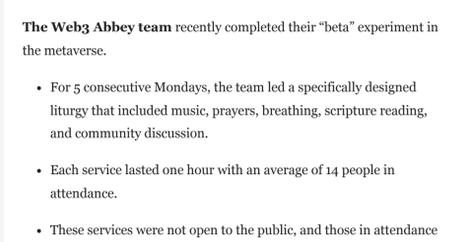
- Now, TryTank has gained access to a sophisticated ethnographic research tool to better understand younger people.
- The technology will allow for digital diaries of participants in their mid-twenties.
- This means the studied volunteers will be able to record their thoughts and more during their days. And we hope to see how they are experiencing their spirituality.
- Diaries have rarely been used in the study of religion but can provide deep insights into the lives of the participants.

Why it matters: For the most part, young people are not coming to church. In particular, Generation Z has no interest in organized religion having become the "nones" we hear so much about.

- But they are seeking to make spiritual sense of their lives and of their world.
- If the church can figure out how they do this, then we can figure out how to meet them there.

What's next: We anticipate that we will begin using the new technology soon to then continue the study based on the early results.

✚ 2. Quick experiment uses SMS to deepen Holy Week



The big picture: With so much going on in the world and so much data coming to us at once, we wanted to use a way to interrupt us during Holy Week so that we can experience it deeper.

How it works: This Holy Week (from Palm Sunday, April 10, to Easter Sunday, April 17), subscribers will receive text messages in real-time so they can walk with Jesus during his final days.

- When we say "real-time" we mean it! Some text messages will arrive early in the morning or late at night as we walk with Jesus and experience the events leading to His death and resurrection.
- As folks read the texts, our hope is that they'll live the Easter story as if it were happening right now, in the moment.

Why it matters: Faith formation happens in "macro" and "micro" moments.

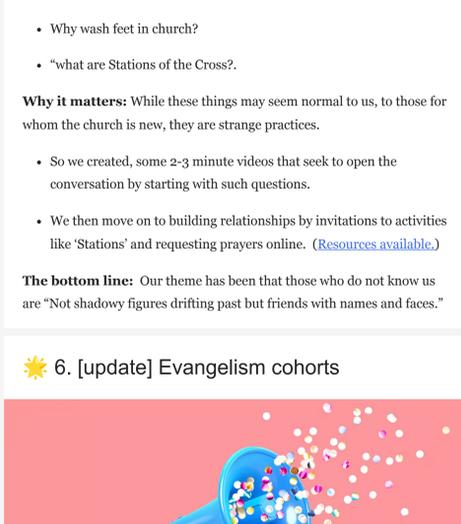
- "Macro" moments are the ongoing faith formation efforts of a congregation such as preaching every week.
- "Micro" moments are the smaller interventions that encourage us to go deeper in our faith.

Go deeper: If we can create simple programs that can be implemented by multiple congregations, micro formation efforts could then be easily shared by many congregations.

- This experiment was created and implemented in about six hours.
- By the end of the day, two dioceses had agreed to get the word out to their congregations and members.

Anyone can sign up, so feel free to text HOLYWEEK to (833) 629-0176. And share with friends too!

🎮 3. [update] Metaverse experiment moving on to next phase



We asked the Rev. Sean Steele, the experiment manager for our metaverse church experiment, to update us on how things are going. Here's his note:

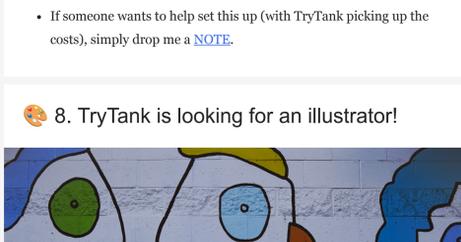
The Web3 Abbey team recently completed their "beta" experiment in the metaverse.

- For 5 consecutive Mondays, the team led a specifically designed liturgy that included music, prayers, breathing, scripture reading, and community discussion.
- Each service lasted one hour with an average of 14 people in attendance.
- These services were not open to the public, and those in attendance only learned about them through direct inquiry. This was intentional because the leadership team wanted to work out any issues before opening the community to the public.
- Feedback from those who participated was largely positive as people really appreciated the intentionality of the space, as well as the rhythm of the liturgy and the depth of the conversations. Constructive feedback almost always revolved around technical issues.

What's next: For the next stage of the experiment, the leadership team will open the service to the general public and begin advertising on social media and other spaces. ¹

The bottom line: If you are interested in learning more about the community or leadership team, please email them [HERE](#).

🚦 4. [update] La Misa in English experiment starting



We asked Brother Luis Hernandez Rivas, the experiment manager for our *La Misa in English* experiment, to update us on how things are going. Here's his note:

Big picture: *La Misa in English* is an exciting new experiment that aims to serve second and third-generation Latinos.

- Research shows that they are sensitive to their culture but prefer their information in English.

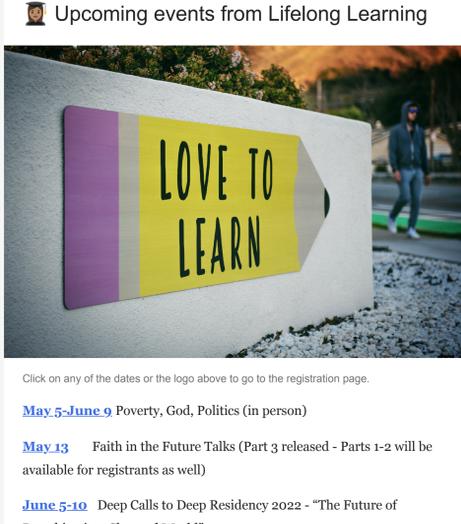
Go deeper: The experiment aims to create a worship and fellowship experience in English, with music in Spanish and opportunities for the celebration of Latin American traditions.

By the numbers: Currently we have 4 congregations enrolled (3 from the Diocese of San Diego and 1 from the Diocese of Missouri) with others in discernment.

- The enrolled congregations are in varying phases with us as they prepare for this new adventure.

What's next: One of them is launching their service this week! Exciting!

👥 5. [update] Evangelism experiment making friends



We asked Rev. Ken Kroohs, the experiment manager for our Easter Evangelism experiment, to update us on how things are going. Here's his note:

So much excitement! The best part of this experiment has been the enthusiasm and excitement in people seeking to reach out to new people.

- So many fantastic efforts are underway with people exploring more effective ways to interact with their community.

One key is beginning with the questions people have:

- What's a "Mundy"?
- Why call it "Good" Friday?
- Why wash feet in church?
- "what are Stations of the Cross?"

Why it matters: While these things may seem normal to us, to those for whom the church is new, they are strange practices.

- So we created, some 2-3 minute videos that seek to open the conversation by starting with such questions.
- We then move on to building relationships by invitations to activities like "Stations" and requesting prayers online. ([Resources available](#).)

The bottom line: Our theme has been that those who do not know us are "Not shadowy figures drifting past but friends with names and faces."

🌟 6. [update] Evangelism cohorts

Seeing the success we have had by having walking alongside congregations as they try evangelism experiments, TryTank partnered with The Episcopal Church to train more mentors to expand the effort.

- We asked Jerusalem Greer, the staff officer for evangelism in the Office of the Presiding Bishop, to update us on how things are going. Here's her note:
- On **March 30, forty evangelism catalysts** gathered on Zoom for an Evangelism Mentor Training.
- The training was led by the Rev. Carol Pinkham Oak, D.Min. from [Thriving in Ministry of Virginia Theological Seminary](#).
- During this two-hour training, potential mentors were given tools and resources for peer-to-peer mentoring within a ministry context.
- After the training, participants were invited to join the Evangelism Mentor Cohort process, which will match mentors to ministry cohorts who are preparing to launch an evangelism action, such as Invitation Sunday, in the fall or winter.

What's next: Jerusalem tells us that more information about these cohorts and how to join will be made available in early summer.

😊 7. [update] Bigger churches can help smaller churches

What's news: Our recent Prayer School experiment allowed folks from around the country to join a class from Grace Church in Oklahoma.

Why it matters: Many smaller congregations cannot regularly offer classes to their members to help them grow in faith.

- TryTank's *1730 Project* is all about creating resources for congregations to thrive even if they are small. (There are 1730 Episcopal congregations with 29 or fewer on a Sunday.)
- Larger congregations offer many faith formation classes all the time.
- The pandemic showed that we can have hybrid offerings for those present "in person" and others online.

Go deeper: For the most part, experiment participants reported that they were able to feel part of the class and found the content fruitful for their faith.

What's next: How might we create a directory where larger congregations can add faith formation classes they are willing to offer to the wider church? Then smaller congregations could offer the classes to their members.

- If someone wants to help set this up (with TryTank picking up the costs), simply drop me a [NOTE](#).

🎨 8. TryTank is looking for an illustrator!

For an upcoming experiment, TryTank is in need of an illustrator. Have you always wanted to see your doodles and cartoons published? This could be your chance!

- If this might be you, send some drawings (of anything!) to Fr. Lorenzo [HERE](#).

🦙 9. One fun thing...the Order of the Llama

Fr. Lorenzo being inducted into the "Order of the Llama"

Recently, Fr. Lorenzo traveled across the pond to lead multiple workshops on innovation and to help church leaders invest in experimentation using the TryTank model.

Catch up quick: The trip included stops in Edinburgh, Scotland as well as Norwich and London, England.

- In all, there were a total of 23 hours of presentations to multiple audiences.
- Also, innovation hubs will be set up in all three areas. (An innovation hub aims to foster innovation in regional ways.)
- Those who followed Fr. Lorenzo on [Facebook](#) were able to see him and his "emotional support llama" as they went along.
- The folks in Scotland thus created an "Order of the Llama" to identify those who are willing to try and go places to seek where the Holy Spirit may be leading us as a church.

Fr. Lorenzo's thought bubble: While this is an amazing honor, we now need to figure out how to get more members of the order. I get to see many amazing people doing creative things all the time...which is exciting.

Stay tuned for more on the Order of the Llama.

Click on any of the dates or the logo above to go to the registration page.

May 5-June 9 Poverty, God, Politics (in person)

May 13 Faith in the Future Talks (Part 3 released - Parts 1-2 will be available for registrants as well)

June 5-10 Deep Calls to Deep Residency 2022 - "The Future of Preaching in a Changed World"

July 6 TryTank's "*Church Shock*" movie released (more details on this soon)

Thanks for reading! Have a blessed Holy Week and an amazing Easter.

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👍 👎

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