FUTURE OF FAITH

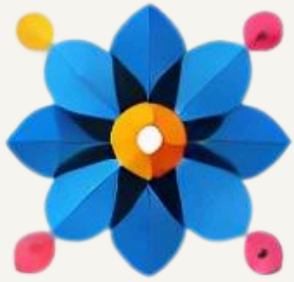
Sacred Tools for Courageous Connection



DREAMING TOGETHER

AN ACTIVITY TO LISTEN AND LEARN ABOUT IDENTITY

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LISTENING IS SACRED

Listening to each other is a sacred act. Listening to others' stories is an encounter with the profound because we are all made of star stuff, connected by the same cosmic origins. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of all people and the importance of fostering an environment where all voices are valued and heard.

Deep listening can have a transformative impact on others' personal development, emotional well-being, communication skills, and overall sense of empowerment. It also changes the listener.

Listening is more than hearing. It is not a call to respond but to embrace silence and sit with others' experiences. When you're truly listening, you are a conduit to the sacredness of the other person.

Sacred Listening creates connection through empathy, thoughtfulness, intention, and action. It can be infused into community initiatives, family time, and everyday interactions to provide each other with vital skills and emotional tools, equipping us all for a well-rounded life.

We aim to help you and others in your world to experience a sense of the profound, reinforcing the belief that in each act of genuine listening and understanding, we encounter the deeper connections that unite us all.

A WORD FROM FUTURE OF FAITH



We built these tools as a guide for you to listen to the people in your life with intention and compassion. We based the activities on our lived experiences as sociologists, researchers, research consultants...and as parents. One of the most valuable things we can do for other people is to get out of the way, making space for their voices, while also being present and hearing what they say. We want you to use these tools to really listen - with wonder, curiosity, and empathy.

MEGAN BISSELL
Executive Director



INTRODUCTION TO SACRED LISTENING

INTRODUCTION TO SACRED LISTENING

In the heart of every person is a story—a constellation of experiences, beliefs, and dreams uniquely their own. As guides and champions of their personal, spiritual, and emotional development, you are called to embrace each person with deep reverence and careful attentiveness. This workbook is a guide to honing the art of Sacred Listening, a pivotal skill in nurturing your connection to the people you support in their own life journey. In an era where conventional pathways to community and connection are uncertain or untrusted, listening is the most important thing you can do for someone.

Sacred Listening Theory

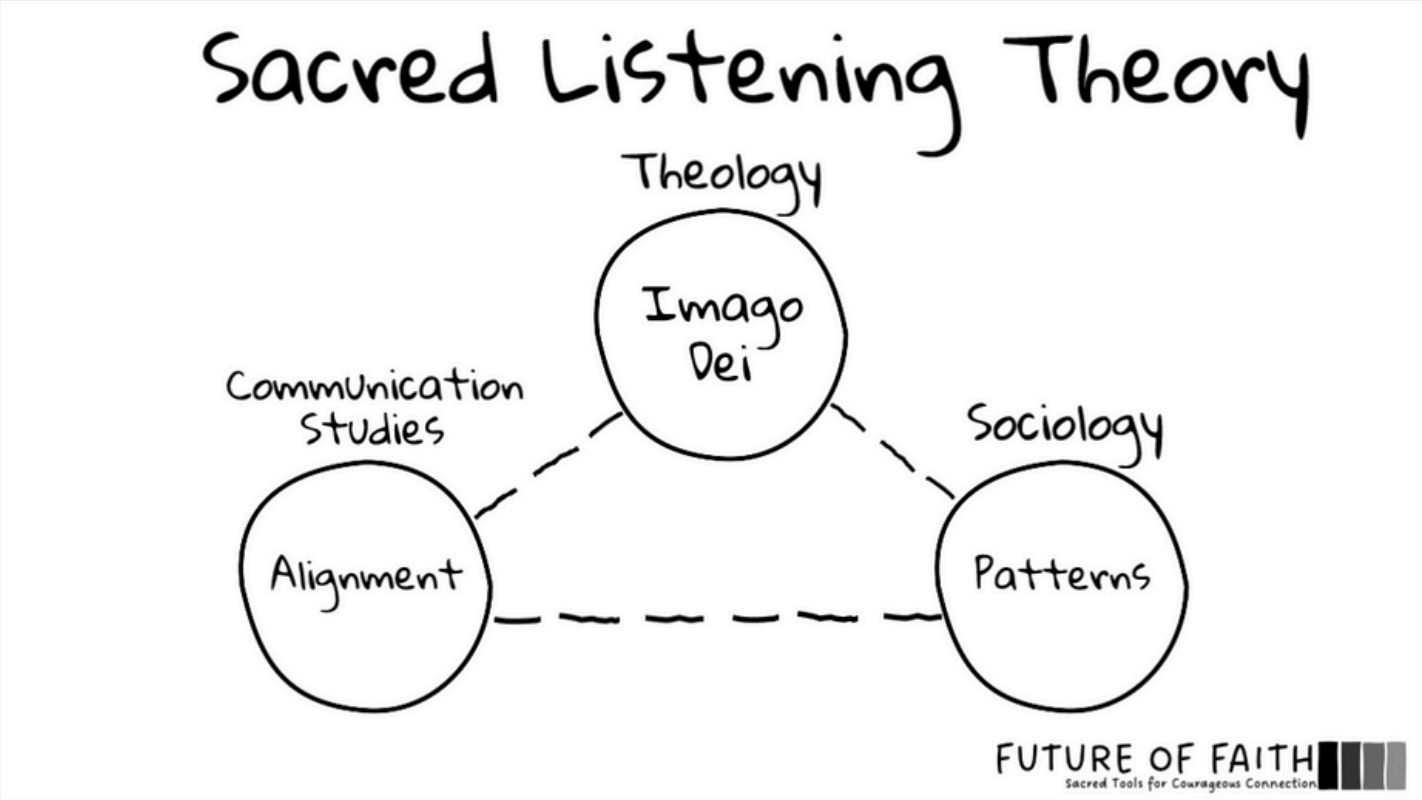
Sacred Listening is both a theory and a process. The three-part theory integrates principles from Theology, Communication Studies, and Sociology. Theology helps us find and embrace the inherent worth of every person, which sets the tone for every interaction (Star Stuff/Imago Dei). Communication Studies centers the importance of genuine engagement (Alignment) in ways that respect the context of the sacred person we're interacting with. Sociology guides the insightful analysis of information we learn from others (Patterns) and gives us ways to use what we learn to connect deeply, follow up and scale relationships beyond ourselves. In short, Sacred Listening is listening to each other in profoundly meaningful encounters, systematically.

Sacred Listening Process

The Sacred Listening process is easy to use, replicable in any setting, and helps scale relationships. It translates to any context and embodies a framework that can be practiced in large settings, small groups, or individual interactions. The process is directly connected to the theory. The first phase (Intentions) of the process is to center everyone by creating a sacred space through ritual and intention setting. The second phase (Ask and Record) aligns everyone through inquiry, sharing, and capturing information, which is carefully tuned to the diverse methods by which people express their lived experiences. The third phase (Explore and Follow-up) requires thoughtfulness and planning to look for patterns in what people share and find ways to use those patterns to follow-up in the ways people need you most.

The diagram on the following page illustrates the theory with the process.

INTRODUCTION TO SACRED LISTENING



Why Sacred Listening Matters

Life moves fast. The ability to deeply connect with others, quickly, is more crucial than ever. Listening authentically can transform interactions, build trust, and create meaningful relationships. Sacred listening allows us to:

- Feel and foster sacred moments with people in everyday interactions.
- Ask meaningful questions and gather important information that leads to deeper connections.
- Recognize patterns in what people are experiencing so that you can respond to needs in a timely and relevant way.
- Scale relationships to build and strengthen your community.
- Form empathetic and open connections that help us receive new ideas, sparking wonder, curiosity, and joy about the world around us in a time where narratives are often fear-driven and negative.
- Be transformed. When we listen deeply to each other, in divine encounter, we are all changed.

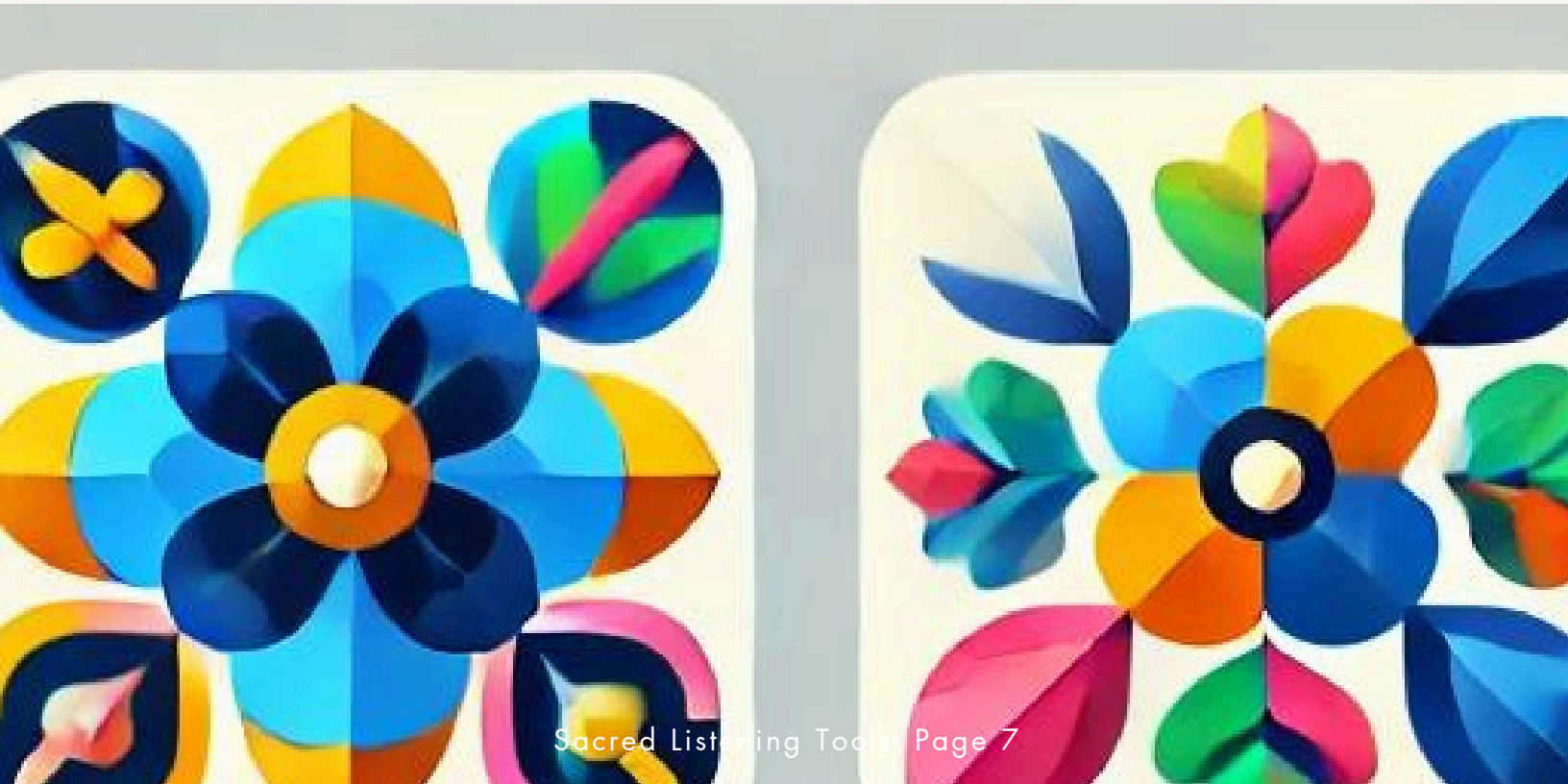
INTRODUCTION TO SACRED LISTENING

Scaling Relationships Through Sacred Listening

The future of community is relationships. Our old, institutional methods of connection don't work anymore because people don't trust institutions. Building the future of connection will require an intimate, hyper-local approach, based on individual relationships. All of that is very clear from the mountains of data collected by national research organizations.

But this call to relational work poses a fundamental problem: How do we do relationships at scale? How do we reach hundreds of people and pay attention to their lives?

Sacred Listening Tools provide the framework to do relational work at scale. It is difficult to hold information from all your relationships in your head, especially when trying to connect with dozens or hundreds of people. These tools help you to gather and use information to make and share intentional connections, rather than just relying on your memory. By scaling up (growing our communities), scaling out (involving more people in ministry), and scaling down (deepening individual relationships), we create a thriving, engaged community. Sacred listening is the foundation of this approach, enabling us to connect, understand, and grow together.



INTRODUCTION TO SACRED LISTENING

What You'll Discover in This Workbook

This workbook is designed to walk you step-by-step through the process of Sacred Listening in the context of an activity that fits your setting.
Here's what you will find:

- Easy to follow process: The three-phase Sacred Listening process focuses on interactions and helps you to build your own capacity for deep listening.
- Insightful questioning: Master the art of asking questions that evoke deeper conversations about life, purpose, and identity.
- Ways to identify patterns: Recording information and finding patterns is key to deep connection and subsequent follow-ups.
- Trust-building strategies: Develop techniques to create environments where ideas and experiences can be explored freely and sincerely.
- Replicable practices: The steps of the process are built into a template to help you think of any interaction, event, or activity as an opportunity for Sacred Listening.

The Transformative Power of Sacred Listening

These tools are designed intentionally to be both formative and summative. At the end of each Sacred Listening Tool, you will be left with summative information you can use to take the right, next steps to engage someone, and the process of listening deeply to them will form you both into a trusting relationship.

Sacred listening benefits the listener as much as the speaker. By learning to listen with empathy, we open ourselves to transformation, gaining new insights and a deeper connection with the profound nature of humanity as revealed in the lives of others. In listening, we ourselves are heard; in guiding, we too are led.

Sacred Listening Tools are not a transactional form of information gathering, like a survey, and they are not a one-off experience without structure, like a conversation. They are intentionally designed tools to help transform you and your community into a deeper relationship with the essence of each person.

INTRODUCTION TO SACRED LISTENING

A Call to Action

Let this workbook be your guide as you carve fresh trails in the landscape of contemporary connection. To listen—with full presence—is an act of immense reverence and love. It is within the meaningful exchange of narratives and experiences that trust is reestablished, understanding is envisioned, and lives are elevated.

Thank you for choosing to make this journey, for accepting the call to be stewards of curious souls in a world that sorely needs custodians of spiritual wisdom. Your role is crucial, your presence a light. Together, let us step forth with attentive ears and tender hearts, to listen, to discern, and to love.

> "Being listened to is so close to being loved that we can't tell the difference."
> - Rev. Dr. Frank Thomas

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS BOOK

This workbook is designed to guide you through the practice of Sacred Listening, fostering deep and meaningful connections. Follow these tips and subsequent steps to ensure you get the most out of your experience.

Take Your Time

Open the activity on a device or print it out. Helpful tip– if you can open it on an iPad or tablet, it scrolls like an eBook. It's a PDF to make sure it can open or print easily.

The first section, "Introduction to Sacred Listening" is just for you to put yourself in the frame of mind. Read through the subsections carefully to orient yourself. These sections share the sentiment, theory, and process for Sacred Listening.

Engage with the content at a comfortable pace. Reflect on the principles and practices presented.

Give yourself the space to fully understand the concepts before moving on to the next section.

Pay attention to the Guidelines section. These were honed through practice and feedback using the tools.

But most of all, make a commitment to shifting your mindset toward relationships rooted in listening as your primary orientation to others in your ministry.

Reflect and Write

When you get to the "Activity" section, pay special attention to the "Purpose" pages. This is the contextual explanation for the specific activity. There are prompts in the activity that queue you to share this Purpose with participants. Take time to write down how you would paraphrase this section or plan to read it aloud to launch the activity. You will share this Purpose during "Set the Tone" in phase 1.

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS BOOK

As you read the Purpose, jot down any questions that arise. These could be questions for yourself, for group discussion, or for further exploration. What else do you want to do with this activity?

Capture any immediate thoughts, reactions, or insights that the content sparks.

Engage with Prompts

Read through the entire "Activity" section and engage with the prompts before you do the activity with others. There are places where you need to think and prepare.

Throughout the workbook, you will find various prompts designed to deepen your understanding and application of Sacred Listening. Take the time to respond thoughtfully.

Use the provided spaces to write your responses. This helps in tracking your progress and insights.

The "Materials" and "Set-up" pages are for your use, with our suggestions, based on the activity.

Read through all of "1. Intentions"

- This is the cornerstone of Sacred Listening, as it's the sacred tone setting part of the activity.
- Integrate your paraphrasing of the "Purpose" of the activity as you plan this phase out.
- Take notes and highlight places where you want to transition, prompt them to do something, or if you need to prepare.
- This is where you'll put together something that will become a ritual for your time together, so choose what you need for that ritual. i.e., a relevant poem or a line of scripture.
- Plan a few reflection questions and prompt them to share a keyword or just take time to write down their thoughts.

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS BOOK

Read through all of "2. Ask and Record"

- Think about the ways you need to be present.
- What distractions are in the room?
- What will you practice and embody during the "Align Expectations" portion?
- Write down any additional questions that you may potentially ask during the "Conduct Meaningful Inquiry" section of this phase.
- Write down actual transitions and segues into next steps.

Read through all of "3. Explore and Follow-up"

- Have a plan for bringing your group or person back together after collecting information. Regrouping for the "Explore" can be challenging, so have a plan to grab them right away.
- This section requires planning and forethought because most people aren't in the practice of looking for patterns in things.
- Let your group or person know that you'll be following up with them, and ask permission for how to contact them, when needed.
- Plan regular follow-up sessions or personal check-ins to reinforce the practices and principles of Sacred Listening.
- Encourage ongoing dialogue and interaction among participants or within yourself through reflection and journaling.

Scale Relationships

Scaling is crucial. Plan for how you will follow-up. It can be tempting to think the work is finished when the activity is concluded, but the real power of Sacred Listening Tools comes in the ways you use the information and trust you've gained from the exercise. Schedule follow-ups and be diligent.

Use the insights gained to expand your practice of Sacred Listening to new contexts and relationships.

Focus on both scaling out (involving more people) and scaling down (deepening individual connections).

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS BOOK

You don't have to be the only one to follow-up. One of the most significant parts of Sacred Listening is that you will learn things that help you connect people to each other. Where someone in your community might be reluctant to sign up as a volunteer indefinitely, they will be much more likely to reach out to someone who is going through a hard time if it is something they have also experienced. Look for connections between people to help build a culture of relationships.

For You

Following the activity is a space for you to reflect, suggestions for follow-up conversations with your group or person, and a step-by-step template to use to build your own Sacred Listening activities and practice, if you'd like. The activities we create are usually built to be done more than once, but you may have your own questions to ask and things you want to do.



SACRED LISTENING PROCESS

Each tool we build follows the process below. This section is for your information only. All you have to do is follow the outline in the pages that follow and we'll guide you through each of these steps.

Phase 1: Intentions
The person sitting across from you is sacred. The space you are creating together is sacred. Sacred Listening begins by recognizing that the interactions you are having with others are powerful, meaningful, and divine. Sacred Listening starts by setting a very intentional, respectful, and empathetic tone for the session that facilitates a deep and meaningful engagement.

To focus on the Intentions Phase:

- **Establish a Sacred Space:** Everyone is sacred, made in the image of the divine, so the time and place you share with your group should be regarded as sacred. Verbally share that with the group and remind them that your time together is safe for people share without judgement.

- **Set the Tone**: Communicate the Purpose (paraphrase or read) and expectations for your time together clearly. This helps put everyone in a similar frame of mind and sets the stage for a heartfelt exchange. Articulate why you are doing this together.

- **Engage Through Rituals:** Introduce rituals that resonate with the group's cultural or spiritual preferences, such as meditation, prayer, or a shared reading, to deepen the collective sense of sacredness. Work together to co-create a ritual that is meaningful to your group. Recreate this same type of ritual practice every time you come together, even if the content changes.

SACRED LISTENING PROCESS

Phase 2: Ask and Record

Questions signify interest and attention. Genuine curiosity aligns people to one another, leading to inclusive dialogue. But inquiry is not always enough to lead to connection. Writing down what others share actively engages you, demonstrating that you are committed to understanding and remembering what they share. It may seem counterintuitive to take notes while someone is sharing, but it is crucial knowing them more deeply.

To focus on the Ask and Record Phase:

- **Alignment**: Carefully tune in to the diverse methods by which individuals express their experiences and truths. Pay attention to how people are engaging. Do they write things down or speak more? Do they draw pictures?

- **Ask Great Questions**: Facilitate a structured dialogue where participants are encouraged to ask and respond to open-ended, meaningful questions. This practice elevates every voice and opens avenues for deeper inquiry.

- **Write it Down**: Demonstrate active listening by taking detailed notes. This not only shows respect and attention to the speakers but also ensures that the insights gathered are remembered and valued.

SACRED LISTENING PROCESS

Phase 3: Explore and Follow-up
Exploration leads to discovery. Explore the information you wrote down to discover patterns, themes, and ideas that emerge. The patterns you find will give you clues to what is happening with the people you engage with and what you should do to follow-up with them. It will also help you know how to scale relationships.

To focus on Explore and Follow-up Phase:

- **Look Back and Learn**: Use the information you collected to have an intentional conversation. You will work together to spot the big ideas and feelings that kept popping up. Look for trends in keywords, behaviors, and shared thoughts.

- **Keep in Touch:** Set up times to meet again or check in with each other. This shows you care about continuing the conversation and value everyone's contributions. Encourage everyone to keep talking and sharing, whether through social media, regular meetings, or casual get-togethers. This keeps your community tight-knit and growing.

- **Spread the Word**: Think about ways to bring more people into relationship. Maybe start a group or network where these conversations can keep blossoming, reaching more people and making a bigger difference. Use the patterns that you found to help connect people to each other.

> "Listening is being able to be changed by the other person."
> – Alan Alda



ACTIVITY: DREAMING TOGETHER

PURPOSE

This unique engagement framework operates under the premise that open and earnest communication can significantly enrich familial relationships, providing young people with a resilient foundation as they navigate their individual journeys. Here's a detailed exploration of why this activity is beneficial, impactful, and necessary.

The core purpose of the "Dreaming Together" activity is to cultivate a nurturing environment where young people feel fully supported in exploring and articulating their future ambitions. Over the course of 30 days, trusted adults engage their children daily with questions designed to probe their hopes, dreams, and aspirations for life before the age of 30. This continuous interaction serves several crucial roles in the development and reinforcement of family bonds and individual growth.

At its heart, this activity is about opening lines of communication that may not typically be explored in day-to-day interactions. By asking specific, forward-looking questions, trusted adults invite their young people to think expansively about their future in a safe and supportive setting. This kind of dialogue helps break down barriers that might exist between generations, particularly within marginalized groups, where young individuals may face unique challenges and concerns that they fear sharing under normal circumstances.

A significant component of the activity is the cultivation of deep listening skills among trusted adults and guardians. In this context, listening goes beyond simply hearing words; it involves understanding the emotions, dreams, and sometimes the unspoken nuances of their young person's thoughts. This practice can transform relationships, making young people feel valued and understood, which is crucial for their self-esteem and mental health.

PURPOSE

For many young individuals, societal or familial expectations can often feel like a barrier to freely pursuing their true aspirations. "Dreaming Together" provides a platform where these young people can express themselves without fear of judgment or misunderstanding. Each question asked is an affirmation, a signal to the young person that what they feel, think, and dream of is important and taken seriously. This validation is essential for their psychological and emotional development.

The daily recording of these conversations is not just a procedural element; it acts as a living document or a time capsule that captures the evolving aspirations of young individuals. This record can be incredibly powerful, serving as a reference point for future conversations and as a tangible reminder of the young person's growth and evolving ambitions.

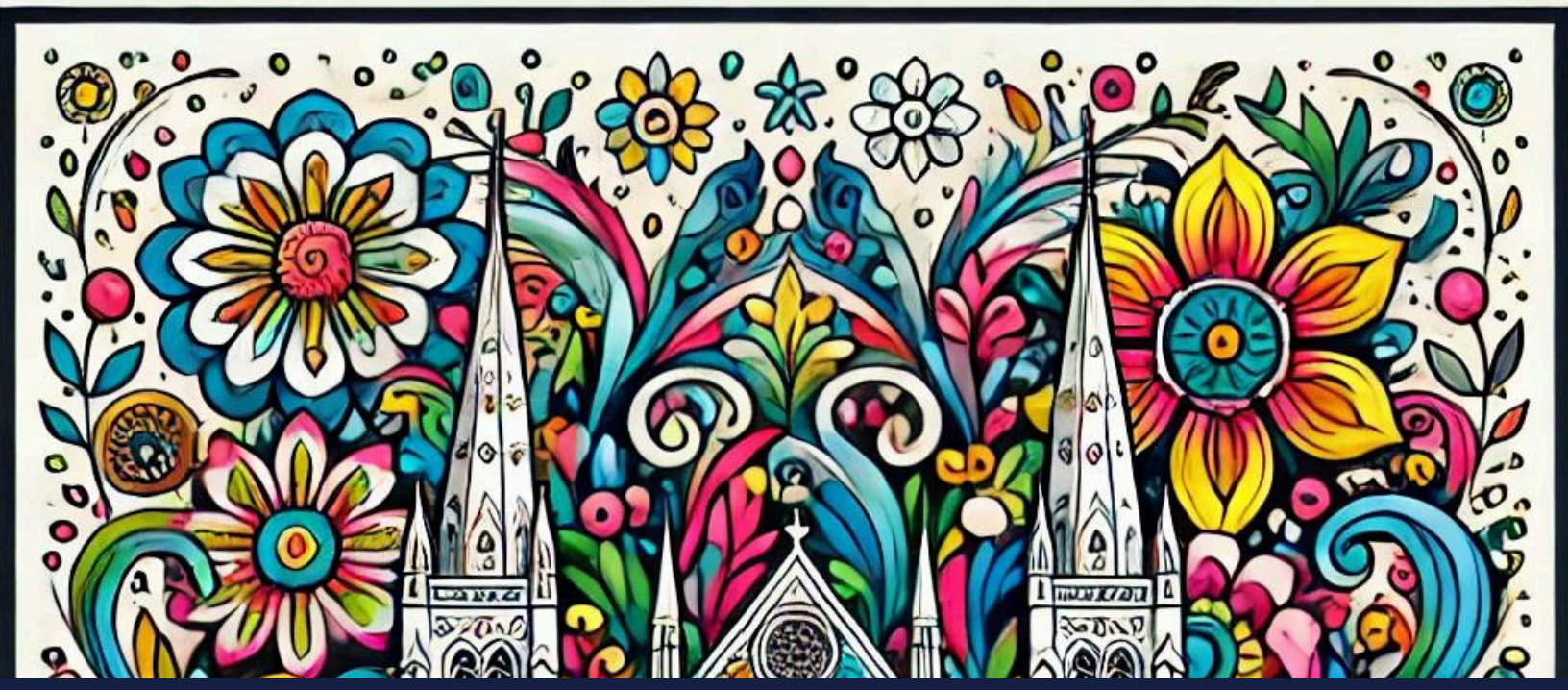
Through regular discussions about their futures, trusted adults can identify ways to practically support their children's aspirations. Whether it's a career ambition, a personal development goal, or a travel dream, understanding these aspirations allows trusted adults to help marshal resources, advice, or encouragement that can make these dreams a more attainable reality.

Engaging in "Dreaming Together" is more than an exercise; it's a critical investment in the relationship between trusted adults and their young people. It tackles the often-difficult task of bridge-building, helping to ensure that as these young individuals grow, they do not feel isolated or unsupported by their closest family members. Moreover, it lays a foundation for resilience and happiness by affirming the young person's right to dream and pursue a life of their choosing, free from prejudice and limitations.

PURPOSE

The activity’s design also includes follow-up steps and the creation of networks to maintain the momentum generated over the 30 days. This foresight ensures that the dialogue initiated here continues to foster a sense of community and belonging long after the month is over. It encourages a continuous commitment to nurturing and validating the young person's evolving path, which is vital in helping them navigate the complexities of growing up with marginalized identities.

In essence, "Dreaming Together: 30 Dreams in 30 Days" is a transformative program that does more than just spark conversation—it builds lasting bridges. It allows trusted adults and guardians to step into their young person’s world and envision their future together in a spectrum of color and possibility that they may not have imagined before. By the end of the 30 days, not only will they have a clearer understanding of their child's dreams, but they'll also have strengthened the bonds that make those dreams achievable. In this way, the activity aligns perfectly with the core missions of empathy, support, and active engagement at Future of Faith, making it a profound tool in the journey toward more inclusive and supportive family dynamics.



MATERIALS NEEDED

- **Journal:** A dedicated notebook or journal for recording daily conversations and reflections.
- **Digital Recorder (optional):** For families who prefer to keep an audio record of their discussions.
- **Pen and Extra Paper:** For taking additional notes or for the young person to doodle or sketch their ideas.
- **Copies of a Selected Poem:** A poem that resonates with the theme of youth and dreaming to read at the beginning of the activity.
- **Comfortable Seating:** Arrange a comfortable seating area that encourages open and relaxed conversation.
- **Calendar:** A calendar to track the daily prompts and ensure consistency throughout the 30 days.
- **Lists of Questions:** This activity includes a list of potential daily prompts as well as discussion questions, if needed.
- **Computer with Internet Access:** For researching any additional information or resources related to the dreams discussed.
- **Contact List:** A list of potential mentors, professionals, or community leaders who could support the realization of the dreams discussed.
- **Private Online Group Setup:** Create a digital space (like a private Facebook group or a dedicated chat group) for sharing progress and additional thoughts.

SET UP

Prepare the Space:

- Designate a specific area in your home where the daily conversations will take place. Ensure this area is quiet, comfortable, and free from distractions.
- Arrange seating in a way that feels intimate and conducive to open dialogue, such as chairs facing each other or a cozy corner with soft furnishings.

Organize Materials:

- Purchase or gather the journal, pens, and any additional stationary needed.
- Print or select the poem digitally and have it accessible for the initial session.
- Test any digital devices that will be used, such as the digital recorder or computer.

Schedule and Plan:

- Review the calendar and set specific times each day for the conversations, considering the best times for both the parent/guardian and the young person.
- Write the start date and a brief daily reminder on the calendar to keep track of the activity's progress.

Communication Setup:

- Create and set up the private online group or digital platform where participants can share their experiences and communicate outside of the daily sessions.
- Ensure all participants have access and understand how to use the platform.

Engagement Preparation:

- Compile a contact list of individuals and resources that might help in realizing the discussed dreams. This might include local experts, workshops, online courses, or community centers.

Initial Briefing:

- Sit down with all participants before the activity starts to go over the purpose, the structure of the sessions, and what each person hopes to gain from the experience.
- Discuss the importance of open communication, respect, and the confidentiality of the conversations.

Follow-up Questions for Daily Conversations

1. **Exploring Details**
   - "What specific aspects of this dream excite you the most?"
   - "Can you describe a day in your life if this dream were realized?"
2. **Connecting Emotions**
   - "How does thinking about this dream make you feel?"
   - "What emotions do you associate with this dream coming true?"
3. **Identifying Obstacles**
   - "What challenges do you think you might face in pursuing this dream?"
   - "Are there any fears or concerns that come to mind when you think about this dream?"
4. **Gathering Resources**
   - "What kind of resources do you think you'll need to achieve this dream?"
   - "Who could you reach out to for support or guidance on this?"
5. **Reflecting on Impact**
   - "How do you think achieving this dream would change your life?"
   - "Who else might be affected or benefit from you achieving this dream?"
6. **Linking to the Past**
   - "Have you had similar dreams in the past? How does this one compare?"
   - "What have you learned from previous experiences that could help you with this dream?"
7. **Looking to the Future**
   - "Where do you see this dream in 5 years? What about 10 years?"
   - "What are the first steps you think you'd need to take to start working towards this dream?"
8. **Understanding Motivations**
   - "What inspired this dream?"
   - "Why is this particular dream important to you right now?"
9. **Considering Variations**
   - "If you had to modify this dream slightly, what would the changes be?"
   - "Are there smaller goals within this larger dream that you might tackle first?"
10. **Encouraging Creativity**
    - "If you could combine this dream with another interest or passion, what would that look like?"
    - "How can you use your unique skills or talents to achieve this dream?"

Daily Prompts

1. What's one thing you hope to accomplish by the time you're 30?
2. If you could live anywhere in the world by 30, where would it be?
3. Is there a skill or hobby you'd like to master before turning 30?
4. Can you name a book you want to have read by the time you're 30? Why that one?
5. What kind of person do you hope to be by 30?
6. Is there a language you would like to be fluent in by 30?
7. What's one fear you hope to overcome by the time you're 30?
8. If you could start a business by 30, what would it be about?
9. What is one adventurous thing you want to have tried by then?
10. Is there a cause or charity you hope to have significantly contributed to by 30?
11. What's an important life lesson you hope to have fully understood by 30?
12. Can you think of a place you'd like to visit before you turn 30?
13. What kind of artistic project would you like to complete by 30?
14. Is there a fitness goal you want to achieve by 30?
15. What kind of relationships do you hope to build by the time you're 30?
16. Do you see yourself owning something special by 30, like a home or car? What is it?
17. What kind of family life do you envision for yourself by 30, if any?
18. How do you hope to give back to your community by 30?
19. Is there a particular job or career achievement you aim for by 30?
20. What's a personal habit you'd like to have developed by the time you're 30?
21. Do you imagine adopting any new philosophy or way of life by 30?
22. Is there a famous person you hope to have met by then?
23. What's one big risk you hope to have taken by the time you're 30?
24. How do you hope your relationship with your family will evolve by then?
25. What kind of education or learning do you want to have completed by 30?
26. Is there a particular technology or gadget you hope to own by 30?
27. What cultural experiences would you like to have had by then?
28. How do you want to celebrate your 30th birthday?
29. What kind of personal achievement would make you proud by the time you're 30?
30. Looking forward to your 30s, what's something you hope to begin right as you turn 30?

INTENTIONS

The person sitting across from you is sacred. The space you are creating together is sacred. Sacred Listening begins by recognizing that the interactions you are having with others are powerful, meaningful, and divine. Sacred Listening starts by setting a very intentional, respectful, and empathetic tone for the session that facilitates a deep and meaningful engagement.

01

ESTABLISH A SACRED SPACE

Daily Ritual: Each day, start the session with a simple breathing exercise to center both participants and help them focus on the present moment. Or simply share a silly emoji or inside joke via text.

Write down something that resonates with you both and start your days that way to remind each other that we're all made of Star Stuff...we are all sacred.

INTENTIONS

02

SET THE TONE

Explain that this activity is a safe space for sharing and exploring without judgment. Emphasize the importance of openness and curiosity.

Make notes about the “Purpose” section that you want to share to set the tone and expectations for the activity. Clarity is kindness. Use your own words or what we’ve provided below.

Share the following about the activity, along with or instead of your notes about the Purpose:

"Hey, I want to try something special with you over the next 30 days. It’s called 'Dreaming Together,' and it’s all about us talking every day about your hopes and dreams for the future. I want to make sure you know that whatever you’re thinking or feeling is really important to me, and I want to be here to listen and support you, no matter what. This is a way for us to get closer, to really understand each other, and to make sure you feel confident and loved as you think about your future. After these 30 days, we’ll keep checking in and making sure that we’re both doing everything we can to help you reach those dreams. It’s not just about talking—it’s about building a stronger connection between us that lasts."

INTENTIONS

03

ENGAGE THROUGH RITUALS

Opening Ritual (Optional): Start with a poem about the experience and innocence of youth to resonate with the theme of dreaming. Consider using a song about dreaming and listening together or poems like the one below or another that reflects on youth and possibilities.

Dreams by Langston Hughes
Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.
Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.



INTENTIONS

03 ENGAGE THROUGH RITUALS

Spend a few minutes reflecting together and write down what stood out about this for your time together. Use the lines below for more questions or for reflection.

REFLECTION

ASK AND RECORD

Questions signify interest and attention. Genuine curiosity aligns people to one another, leading to inclusive dialogue. But inquiry is not always enough to lead to connection. Writing down what others share actively engages you, demonstrating that you are committed to understanding and remembering what they share. It may seem counterintuitive to take notes while someone is sharing, but it is crucial to knowing them more deeply.

01

ALIGNMENT

Clarify the Process: Explain that for the next 30 days, each day will involve a prompt about dreams and aspirations. The aim is not to make definitive plans but to explore and imagine future possibilities together. Clearly outline that each day will involve a prompt to explore dreams and aspirations, with the goal of listening and understanding rather than advising.



ASK AND RECORD

02 ASK GREAT QUESTIONS

Daily Questions: Use a structured question each day to guide the conversation. You can either use the same question every day, such as “What is one thing you want to do before you’re 30?” or “What’s a dream you have that you could accomplish by 30 that you haven’t shared already? OR you could use a different question every day (suggested list included).

Examples include:

- Day 1: "What’s something you’ve always wanted to learn and why?"
- Day 2: "Imagine a place you’d love to visit. What draws you to it?"
- Day 3: "If you could invent something, what would it be and how would it help others?"
- Day 4: If you could meet anyone, who would it be and why?
- Day 5: What’s one thing you’ve always wanted to try but haven’t yet?

Continue with similar questions that encourage participants to think broadly and creatively about their desires and interests. (see list included below)

Talk or Text: You could either do the whole thing in dialogue, listening carefully to their responses, or you could give them time to process throughout the day by sharing the prompt in writing and having them write their answer down. You could also have them do the entire thing by text and record both the question and the answers they send back. Send the question via text in the morning, and let them have the day to answer, but have them write down their answer in a short response to track it.

Make notes about trends and things that strike you as important.

ASK AND RECORD

03

WRITE IT DOWN

Recording Responses: If you haven't opted to text or give them a card with the prompt to write on, keep a shared journal or digital document where both the young person and the adult can jot down thoughts, feelings, and any insights from the day's conversation. This can be revisited later to see how dreams evolve over time.

EXPLORE AND FOLLOW-UP

01 LOOK BACK AND LEARN

Reflection Session: At the end of the 30 days, schedule a longer session to discuss what was learned about each other's dreams. Make this a special setting like a dinner or a coffee date to put emphasis on your presence

Find the Patterns: Together, look for themes or recurring ideas that might point to deep-seated passions or goals. Have them highlight major themes or aspirations that are common across what they've shared. Write down key words or thoughts that helped you both listen to the hopes of their future.



EXPLORE AND FOLLOW-UP

02

PLAN COMMITTED FOLLOW-UPS

Future Steps: Based on the dreams discussed, plan small, actionable steps that can help the young person explore their interests further. This might include visiting a place they talked about, taking a class for a skill they want to learn, or even starting a small project together related to their invention idea.

Continued Conversations: Establish a routine, maybe once a month, to revisit the conversations and update each other on progress or new dreams.

Check in: Schedule check-ins once a month where you choose one of their dreams and ask questions about it. Have they tried to make progress toward a goal? It's ok if they haven't, but it's good to know if they're actively working on attainable dreams so you can listen and be a resource to them.



EXPLORE AND FOLLOW-UP

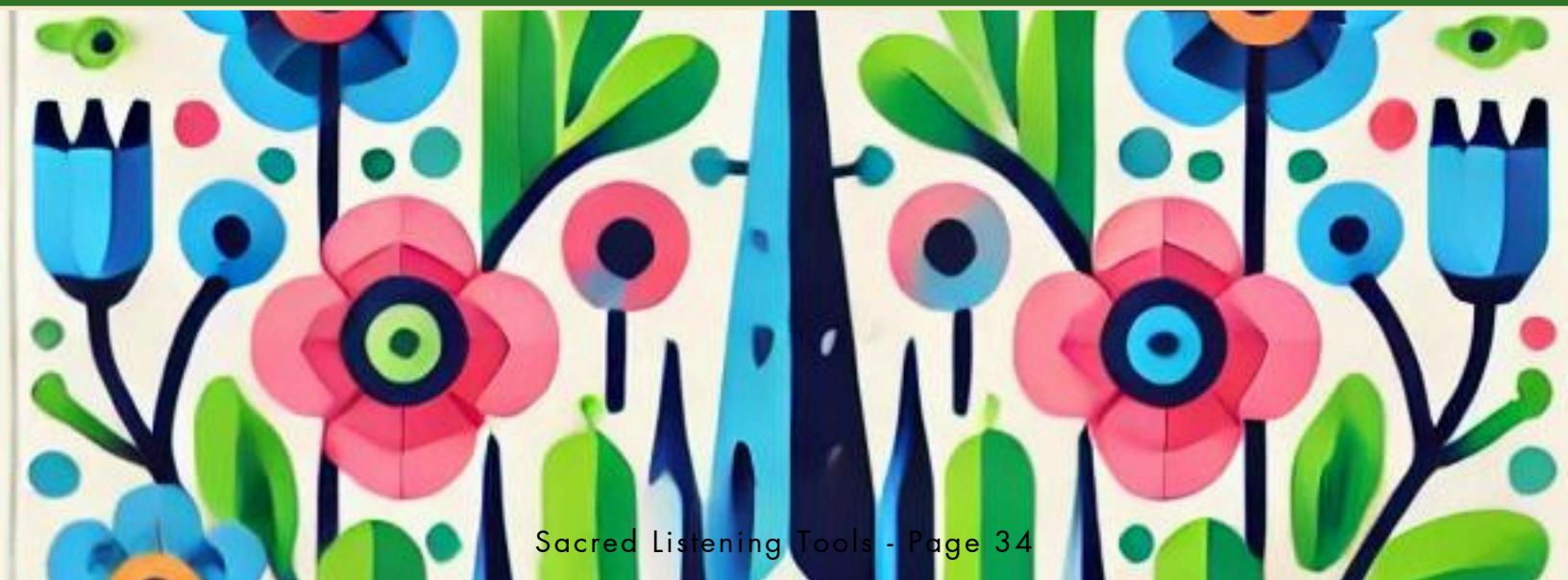
03

SPREAD THE WORD

Community Engagement: Encourage other families or groups within the community to undertake this activity. Share your structure and findings to inspire others.

Make Connections: Connect young people with people in the community or in your life that can provide expertise, resources, or support for specific dreams. For instance, linking them with a local chef or community kitchen if they're interested in culinary work.

Make notes below about who you can connect them with and why. Follow through.





FOR YOU AND FOLLOW-UP

TIPS AND TRICKS FOR DOING SACRED LISTENING

Lean into the "Sacred"

- Mindset Shift: Remind yourself that every interaction is sacred. That person sitting across from you is a reflection of God, star stuff, divine energy…sacred.
- Understand Intentions: Most people don't take any time at all to breathe, center, be still, or even be present. Intention-setting by using a ritual, no matter how small, anchors you to the sacred being you're interacting with. A deep breath, a moving poem, a song, a candle; it's a symbol of their importance to you, and the significance of the moment.

How to Be Present When Listening

- Ground Yourself: Just as you set an intention for your time with others, make sure you do that for yourself. Before starting an activity, take a moment to center yourself. Deep breaths and a moment of silence can help you focus and be fully present.
- Maintain Eye Contact: Show your engagement and respect through eye contact but be mindful of cultural differences regarding direct eye contact.
- Body Language: Use open and relaxed body language to create a welcoming atmosphere.

Active Listening and Alignment

- Reflective Listening: Paraphrase what the speaker has said to show understanding and encourage them to expand on their thoughts.
- Ask Open-Ended Questions: Encourage deeper conversation with questions that require more than yes or no answers.
- Non-Verbal Cues: Nod, smile, and use other non-verbal affirmations to show that you are engaged.
- Ways of Sharing: Be very intentional about how you ask people to share. Offer options for communication to honor different styles and needs.

Listen More, Speak Less

- Respect Sacred Moments: Consider each person's story as sacred. Avoid interrupting, as you wouldn't disrupt a sacred moment.
- Practice Patience: Allow the speaker to finish their thoughts without rushing to respond.
- Don't Have Answers: You don't need to have answers, solutions, or even a response. "I don't know" is an acceptable thing to say. So is nothing at all.

TIPS AND TRICKS FOR DOING SACRED LISTENING

The Laws of Listening

- Listen First: Prioritize truly hearing the speaker's words and emotions before formulating your response.
- Listen Again: Reflect on what was said, confirming your understanding.
- Listen More: Continue to engage with the speaker's message, demonstrating ongoing interest and respect.

Prime Them to Share

- Preparation: Let participants know in advance that they will be sharing their stories. Give them time to prepare mentally and emotionally.
- Encouragement: Reassure them that their voice is valuable and appreciated. Make sure they know their words are safe with you.
- Transparency: Share your own stories that are relevant without taking up too much space. Be an open person.

Embrace Silence

- Silence is Sacred: Create an environment where silence is comfortable. It is a space for reflection and processing.
- Respect the Pause: Allow silences to exist naturally. If you respect and revere the silence, so will they.
- Make Silence and Normalize it: Be quiet so that silence happens, then emote positively, breathe again, and demonstrate that you're embracing it as a sacred moment. Just let it happen.

Pre-Write Prompts and Follow-Up Questions

- Be Prepared: Write prompts and follow-up questions to pull from in advance to ensure a smooth flow of conversation. You don't want to be formulating your next question while they're speaking.
- Adapt as Needed: Use these prepared questions as a guide but remain flexible based on the direction of the conversation.
- Open-Ended Questions: Use questions like "What has been on your mind lately?" or "Can you tell me more about that?"
- Follow-Up: Reflect back what you've heard and ask for more detail. Example: "That sounds challenging. How did you feel about it?"

TIPS AND TRICKS FOR DOING SACRED LISTENING

Handling Difficult Conversations

- Empathetic Responses: When someone shares something difficult, respond with empathy. Phrases like "Thank you for sharing that with me" or "I can't imagine how that feels" can be validating.
- Follow-Up Ideas: Ask gentle follow-up questions that allow the speaker to elaborate if they choose. "Can you tell me more about that experience?" or "How has that affected you?"

Flexibility

- Adaptability: Be okay with the session not going according to plan. Flexibility allows for genuine and meaningful interactions.
- Go with the Flow: Let the conversation naturally evolve, even if it deviates from the planned structure.
- Patterns: The patterns you discover in the information you collect will make sense to you. Let them emerge and be patient with yourself as they do. You'll see patterns in individuals and in groups.

Transparency and Trust

- Clear Communication: Explain why recording their words is beneficial, especially in spaces where trust may be an issue.
- Building Trust: Be honest about the purpose of the recordings and how they will be used to honor their stories.

> "Silence is essentially a surrender to the holiness of the divine mystery."
>
> – Sister Wendy

DIY SACRED LISTENING

As we started using the Sacred Listening tools in the field, we realized that it would be helpful for you to have a set of prompts and action steps to build your own version using activities that your group or community enjoys. This DIY guide helps you take your local knowledge and put it into our framework so you can use any activity to make connections, gather information, and scale relationships. We suggest following the steps of this guide with your group as a community building exercise!

Instructions: Use this template to create your own Sacred Listening activity for any interaction. It can be used for anything from building a full-scale activity to using the prompts to practice everyday engagement.

01

INTENTIONS

Objective: Recognize and establish the sacred nature of the interaction.

Establish a Sacred Space

- **Prompt**: Begin by acknowledging that each person here is sacred. Remind each other that this space is sacred and free of judgment, where all ideas are welcome.
- **Action:** Describe how you will create a sacred space (e.g., a moment of silence, a grounding exercise).

Set the Tone

- **Prompt:** Clearly state the purpose and expectations for this interaction, emphasizing care and mutual respect.
- **Action:** Write down your purpose and expectations for the session.

Engage Through Rituals

- **Prompt:** Introduce a ritual that resonates with the group's cultural or spiritual preferences to deepen the sense of sacredness.
- **Action:** Describe the ritual you will use (e.g., meditation, prayer, shared reading).

DIY SACRED LISTENING

02

ASK AND RECORD

Objective: Facilitate inclusive dialogue through genuine curiosity and active notetaking.

Alignment

- **Prompt:** Pay attention to how individuals express their experiences. Note different engagement styles.
- **Action:** Describe how you will observe and record these expressions.

A*sk Better Questions*

- **Prompt:** Encourage open-ended, meaningful questions that invite deeper responses.
- **Action**: List three to five open-ended questions you will ask (e.g., "What was a meaningful experience for you recently?").

Write it Down

- **Prompt:** Show respect and attention by taking detailed notes.
- **Action:** Decide who will take notes and how the notes will be recorded (e.g., notebook, digital document).

DIY SACRED LISTENING

03

EXPLORE AND FOLLOW-UP

Objective: Identify patterns and themes to deepen relationships and plan future engagements.

Look Back and Learn

- **Prompt:** Review the notes to identify key themes and patterns. Discuss the big ideas and feelings that emerged.
- **Action:** Describe how you will review and discuss the collected information.

Keep in Touch

- **Prompt**: Plan follow-up meetings or check-ins to continue the conversation.
- **Action:** Write down your plan for regular check-ins or follow-up meetings.

Spread the Word

- **Prompt:** Think about ways to involve more people in these conversations and expand your circle.
- **Action:** Describe how you will share your insights and engage more people (e.g., starting new groups, hosting events).

FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

For the 4 weeks following your activity, check in with each person you connected with in a meaningful way. You can text them once a week and either ask them a personally crafted question based on something from your time together, or one of these directed questions. They should know you're thinking of them, and that you don't want anything from them. Note how they responded (or didn't). You don't have to track specific answers, but rather their receptiveness, openness, opportunities you have to adjust your messaging, etc.

Week 1: Have you connected with someone this week that means a lot to you?

Week 2: How many conversations have you had about faith, religion, spirituality, etc. this week?

FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Week 3: How many times did you feel uncertain about talking to someone about faith, religion, spirituality, etc.?

Week 4: Who can you go to this week to have a conversation about faith, religion, spirituality, etc.?

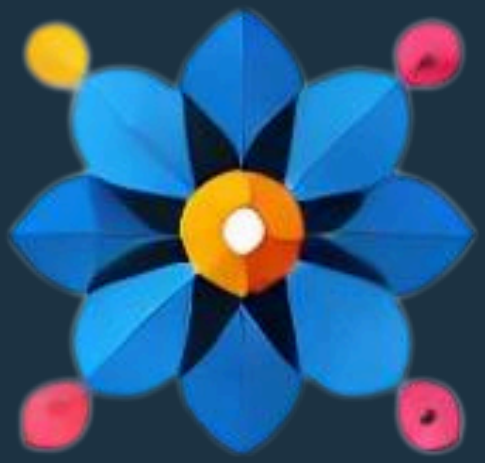
YOUR REFLECTION

This page is for your own reflection and follow up notes. This is a great place to capture future questions, observe patterns, and be reflective of your own behaviors, biases, and feelings during this exercise.

Be honest with yourself. Where are the places that you are uniquely positioned to be a trusted person in your community? What is getting in your way? How can you listen better? What are the listening practices you need to develop?

THANK YOU!

We are honored that you are part of the Future of Faith community. We are committed to listening more deeply so that we can have better conversations, ask better questions, and tell better stories in our faith lives. Please visit our website for more exercises focused on different audiences and objectives. www.futureoffaith.org



FUTURE OF FAITH

Sacred Tools for Courageous Connection