FUTURE OF FAITH

Sacred Tools for Courageous Connection



THE LIGHTHOUSE

ACTIVITIES TO BUILD BELONGING

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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.

YOUR GUIDES



MEGAN BISSELL

Sociologist and Researcher

I built these tools as a guide for you to listen to the people in your life with intention and compassion. I based the activities on my experiences as a sociologist, a researcher, a research consultant, and as a parent of young people. One of the most valuable things we can do for young people is to get out of the way, making space for their voices, while also being present and hearing what they say. Listen with wonder, curiosity, and empathy.

CATHERINE MONTGOMERY

Amazing Human

Catherine is the reason we are doing this because she believes in safe and meaningful places for all people. She has created something truly incredible with The Lighthouse, and with any luck, there will be a bunch of them in the near future. Catherine embodies openness and inclusion and can give just about anyone a lesson on how to listen to young people and treat them as sacred. She also has her own young people!





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

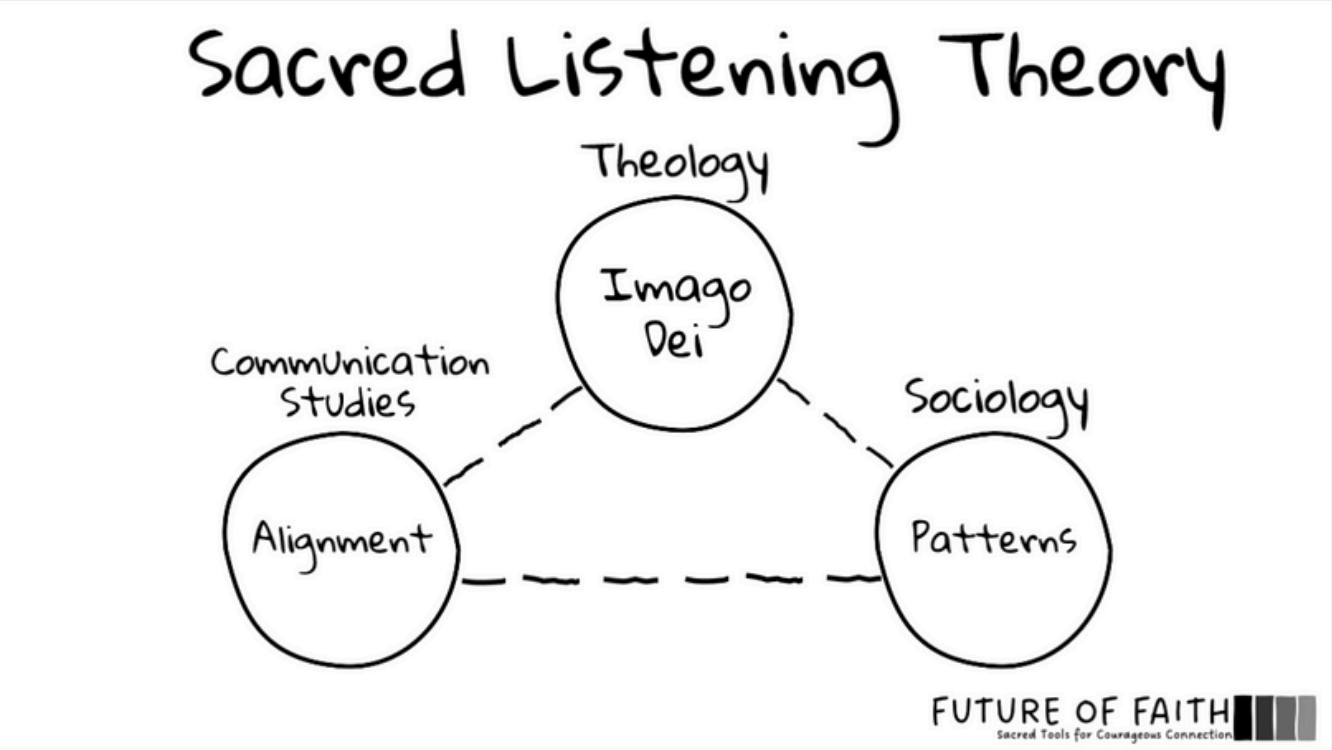
Sacred Listening is both a theory and a process. The three-part theory integrates principles from Theology, Communication Studies, and Sociology. Theology helps us find and embrace the inherent worth of every person, which sets the tone for every interaction (Star Stuff/Imago Dei). Communication Studies 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" (Make dynamic when we build the PDF)

- 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.

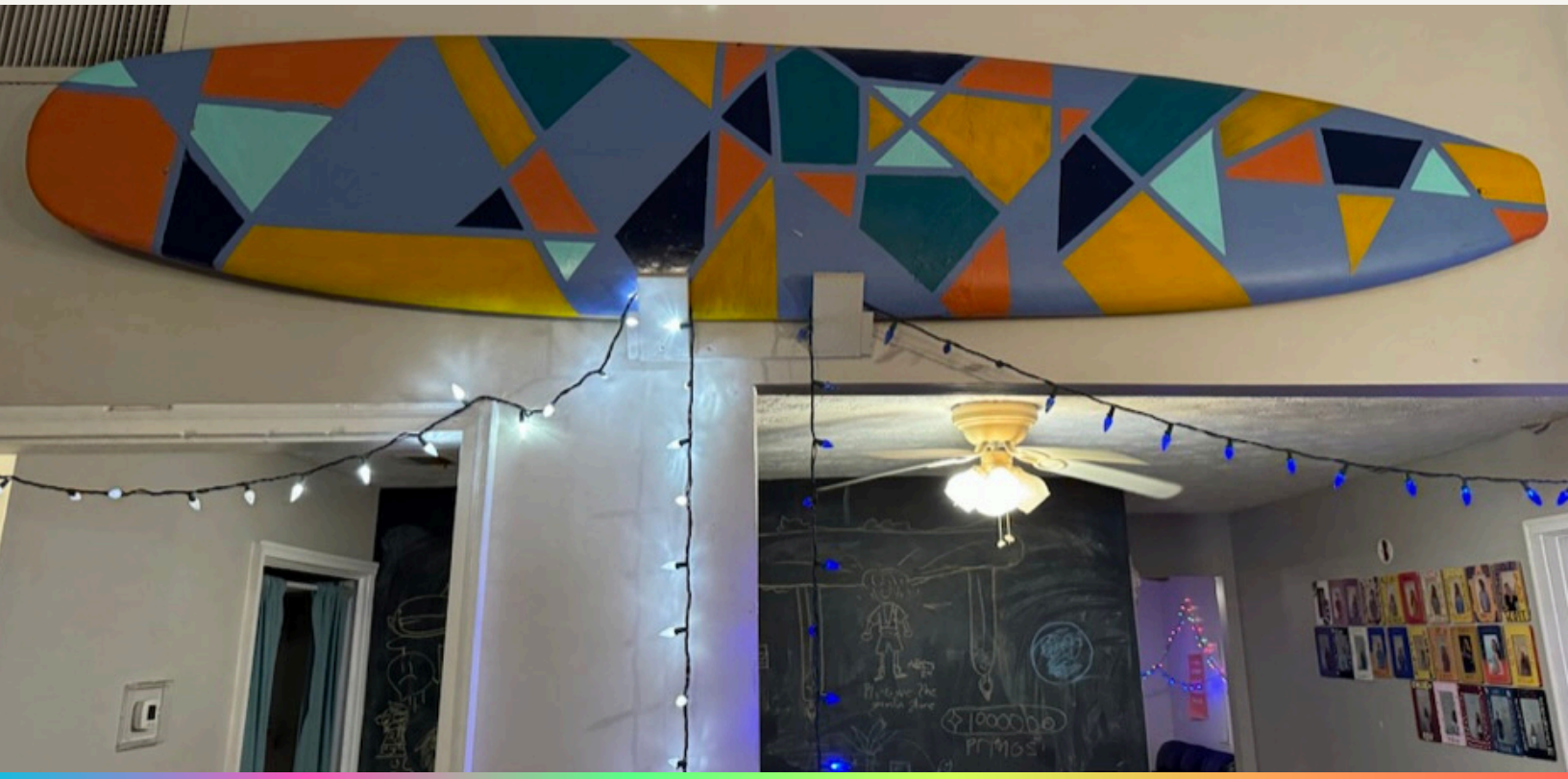
Focus on both scaling out (involving more people) and scaling down (deepening individual connections).

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: RESONANT LITTLE SPARKLES

PURPOSE

Floralegia, a method of extracting "sparklets" or resonant phrases from a chosen text, serves as a powerful listening and reflection tool. It allows participants to delve into a shared text—typically poetry or prose that speaks to universal experiences—and extract individual phrases that resonate on a personal level.

This process is a means of uncovering personal meanings and shared human experiences. By focusing on phrases that strike a chord, participants engage in a process of self-discovery and communal sharing that highlights the diversity of interpretation and the unity of emotional response.

The activity begins by establishing a sacred space, both physically and metaphorically. This space is defined by openness, respect, and a collective commitment to empathy and understanding. Once the space is set, the core activity involves deep engagement with the selected text. Participants read through the text to identify and then share their sparklets.

This sharing is structured to allow each participant to express why particular phrases stand out, linking these choices to personal experiences or current life reflections. This approach accommodates different styles of engagement, from those who are more introspective to those who are vocal, ensuring everyone can participate in a manner that feels comfortable to them.

The selected sparklets are then woven into a new collective text. This creative synthesis is a communal effort where the order of phrases and their juxtaposition bring forth new meanings and insights. Participants engage in revising this order, exploring how different arrangements alter their collective message and emotional impact. This step is vital as it demonstrates how perspectives can shift and evolve through collaborative effort, reflecting the dynamic nature of communal interpretation and catering to those who engage through active participation and those who prefer observation and reflection.

PURPOSE

A crucial part of this activity involves planning for future engagements and considering how the dialogue can be extended beyond the initial group. This could involve organizing public sharing events, initiating collaborative art projects, or setting up digital forums for continued discussion. Each of these steps helps to scale the relationships developed during the floralegia sessions, fostering a broader community of understanding and respect. These extensions ensure that the activity's impact is not confined to the participants alone but reaches others who can engage with the outcomes in various forms—be it through visual art, written expressions, or digital interactions.

Participants are encouraged to keep a copy of the collective text, reflecting on it individually and considering how it might inspire or support their personal and community projects. They are encouraged to document their ongoing reflections or actions inspired by the session, creating a living record of how the floralegia activity has influenced their lives and communities. This continuous engagement fosters a sustained connection among participants and with the broader community, reinforcing the cycle of sacred listening, reflection, dialogue, and action, and catering to those who benefit from ongoing, evolving discussions and those who thrive on periodic, reflective practices.

The florilegia activity is more than just a method of engaging with text; it is a transformative process that reinforces the intrinsic value of each participant's voice, fosters deep communal connections, and inspires individuals to carry the sacredness of their interactions into their broader social and personal lives. This activity serves as a model for how listening, thoughtful reflection, and dialogue can lead to a more empathetic and connected world.

Florilegia: Explore resonant words in little pieces

I**dentify Your Sparklets:** Read through the passage carefully and note down any phrases that "sparkle" for you. These are words or short phrases that resonate deeply with you. Focus on what catches your attention in this moment of your life.

Share Your Sparklets: Choose one sparklet to share with your group. Explain why it stood out to you and how it connects with your current experiences. Listen to each person's choice and reflections to appreciate the diversity of perspectives.

Create a New Text: Combine all the selected sparklets into a single text by writing them down in sequence. Read this new text aloud together. Reflect on its meaning and the interplay of different phrases. How does this combination create new insights?

Reorder the Sparklets: Rearrange the sparklets and read the text again. Notice how the new order changes its impact. Does the meaning shift? Does it evoke different feelings or bring new elements into focus?

Find the Common Thread: Look for a common theme or thread that ties your new text together. Identify a single word that captures its essence, such as "resilience," "patience," or "love." Reflect on how this theme represents the collective insights of your group.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- [ ] Copies of the selected poem or text for each participant.
- [ ] Notebooks or paper for each participant to write down their sparklets.
- [ ] Pens or pencils for writing
- [ ] A large whiteboard or flip chart with markers for documenting the group's collective text.
- [ ] A quiet, comfortable room arranged to facilitate a circle or semi-circle seating.
- [ ] A projector and screen if planning to use digital documents or presentations (optional).



TEXT IDEAS

The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changing World
by Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu
Theme: Joy, resilience, and compassion.
Description: A dialogue between the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu on how to cultivate joy and peace, even in the face of adversity.

The Alchemist
by Paulo Coelho
Theme: Personal growth, dreams, and destiny.
Description: This timeless novel follows Santiago, a shepherd, on his journey to find his "Personal Legend," offering wisdom about following your dreams and finding happiness along the way.

Tuesdays with Morrie
by Mitch Albom
Theme: Life, love, and wisdom.
Description: A heartwarming memoir that chronicles the life lessons shared between a man and his former professor, focusing on love, happiness, and what really matters in life.

The Sun and Her Flowers
by Rupi Kaur
Theme: Growth, healing, and resilience.
Description: This poetry collection explores themes of love, healing, and personal growth, focusing on the resilience that comes from overcoming adversity.

A Year with Rumi: Daily Readings
by Jalaluddin Rumi, translated by Coleman Barks
Theme: Love, wisdom, and inner peace.
Description: This collection of daily poems from the Sufi mystic Rumi offers timeless reflections on love, unity, and spiritual wisdom.

A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood: The Poetry of Mister Rogers
by Fred Rogers
Theme: Kindness, hope, and joy in everyday life.
Description: A collection of the beloved songs and poetry of Mister Rogers, celebrating love, kindness, and the joy of being exactly who we are.

SET UP

Room Preparation

- Arrange seating in a circle or semicircle to encourage open communication and eye contact among participants.
- Set up the whiteboard or flip chart in a place visible to all participants for group work and note-taking.
- If using a projector, ensure it is properly connected and operational, and the screen is visible to all participants.

Materials Distribution

- Place copies of the selected poem or text at each seat or distribute them as participants arrive, or make sure you have access to a printer or way to display the one you choose together.
- Ensure that each participant has access to a notebook or paper and a pen or pencil for noting down their sparklets.

Technical Setup

- Check that all technical equipment (projector, speakers) is functioning correctly before the start of the session.
- Arrange for someone to be available to troubleshoot any technical issues during the session.

Environment Enhancement

- If desired, use soft lighting or lamps to create a calming atmosphere.
- Depending on the group's preferences, you may introduce elements like candles (if safe), flowers, or other non-distracting items to enhance the sense of a sacred space.

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

Opening Gesture: Begin by affirming the inherent sacredness of each participant. This could involve a short discussion or a reflective question such as, "What does it mean to you to treat each other as sacred?" Consider a simple gesture like a moment of silence to acknowledge everyone's presence and shared humanity, emphasizing that everyone is made of the same "star stuff"—elements formed in the stars, signifying our interconnectedness.

Creating an Environment of Respect and Openness: Use inclusive language and practices that engage participants' empathy and imagination. You might ask, "In what ways can we ensure our space respects everyone's individuality and experiences?"



INTENTIONS

02

SET THE TONE

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.

Establish that the goal is to explore identity, connection, and expression through the selected text, allowing for personal and group discoveries. For example, "Today, we’re here to explore and share our perspectives through poetry, learning from each other in a space that values every voice equally."

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

Floralegia is an activity that helps us listen deeply to each other by focusing on phrases from a shared text that personally resonate with us. By sharing these meaningful "sparklets," we connect our individual experiences with those of the group, creating a space of empathy and understanding. This process shows care by honoring each person's voice, fostering a sense of belonging, and encouraging us to carry the insights and connections we make into our everyday lives, strengthening our relationships and our community.

INTENTIONS

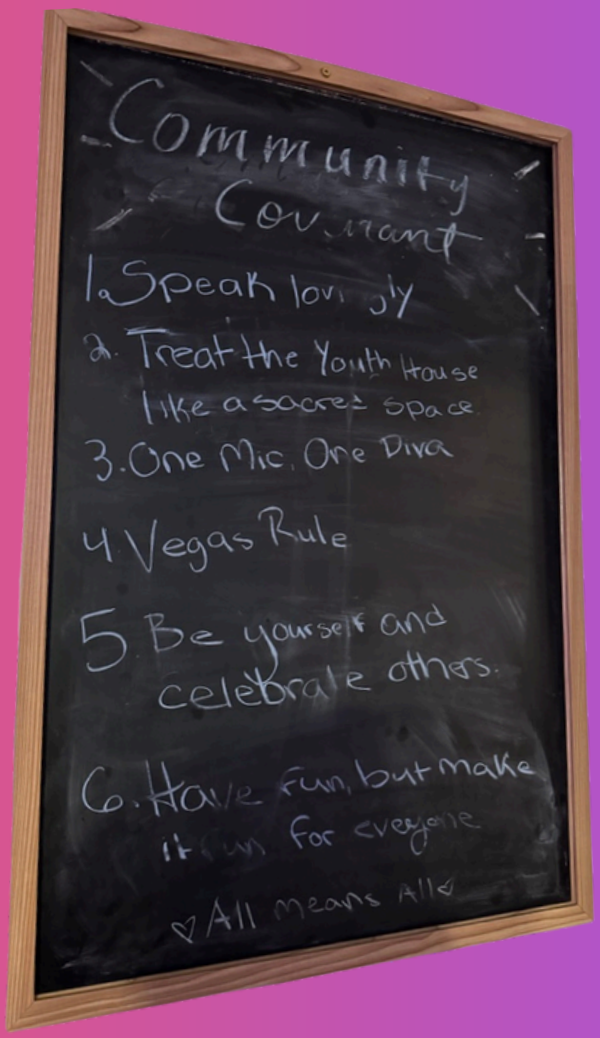
03

ENGAGE THROUGH RITUALS

Introduce a ritual that resonates with the group, which could be secular or spiritual, depending on the preferences of the participants. This might be a shared reading of a meaningful quote or poem, a short meditation, or a moment of silent reflection.

Suggestion:

The Lighthouse has a Covenant on the wall that was written by the students. Read the Covenant out loud either as a group, or have individuals in the group take turns reading one. Spend just a few minutes reflecting on what words are resonating from the Covenant on that specific day. Write down what they share– it indicates what they're feeling.



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

Purpose and Approach: Begin by clarifying the purpose of this phase, which is to engage deeply with the chosen text through personal reflections and shared dialogue. Explain the florilegia process, emphasizing that the focus is on personal resonance with the text rather than analytical interpretation.
Establish Ground Rules: Set simple, clear guidelines for interaction to maintain a safe and respectful environment. Ask the group, "What are some ground rules we can agree on to make everyone feel safe and respected during our discussion?"



ASK AND RECORD

02

ASK GREAT QUESTIONS

Reading and Sparklets: Read through the chosen poem or text at least once as a group to get a sense of its overall meaning and tone.

- Identifying and Recording Sparklets: Individually, each participant reads through the text again, jotting down specific phrases or sentences that "sparkle" for them—phrases that resonate, challenge, or speak to them personally.
- Participants use notecards or a shared document to record phrases that resonate with them. Encourage them to note why these phrases stand out. "As you hear these words, which ones feel like they light up for you? What feels particularly relevant or striking?"

Developing Questions: Each participant comes up with one question related to their sparklet, considering why it resonates with them or what it reveals about their feelings or experiences. These questions can be as open-ended as:

- "Which phrase did you choose and what personal meaning does it hold for you?"
- "Why does this phrase feel important right now in my life?"
- "What does this sparklet make me question or want to explore further?"
- "What emotions does this phrase evoke for you, and why?"



ASK AND RECORD

03

WRITE IT DOWN

Roundtable Sharing: Break the room up into small groups of 3 or 4 people each. Each participant shares their sparklet and poses their question to the group.

Scribe: Assign a scribe or use a shared digital document to take detailed notes on the sparklets shared and the discussions they prompt. This documentation should capture the essence of each participant's contribution while respecting their privacy.

Create New Mini-Texts: Have the scribe write down the sparklets all together in a random order, creating a new mini-text. Each group should read the new mini-text aloud and discuss key words that came up during their discussions about each sparklet. What feelings and ideas come up when you read the text aloud together? The scribe should capture both the text and the key words and sentiments the come up during the conversation.

Full Group Sharing: Have the groups come back to the large group, prepared to share their new mini-texts and some key words that came up. Have each group read their newly constructed poem aloud, and then discuss the key words that came up in the small group discussions.

Record Large Group Responses: The facilitator or a designated recorder notes down the responses, ensuring that each participant's insights and key words are captured. This can be done on a large paper visible to all or in a digital document projected on a screen.

Questions for Discussion:

What words or phrases jump out at you as you read? Why might that be?
Is there a line that particularly speaks to you at this moment in your life? Can you share why?

Reflect and write down key words, phrases, thoughts, funny moments, etc. on the next page.

ASK AND RECORD

EXPLORE AND FOLLOW-UP

01

LOOK BACK AND LEARN

Creating and Reflecting on New Text: Using the mini texts that each group compiled out of their collective sparklets, assemble these into a new collective text as a large group. Read this composition aloud as a group to appreciate the emerging narrative and meanings.

Discussion and Revision: Engage in a group discussion to analyze how the arrangement of sparklets affects the interpretation. Experiment by rearranging this order to explore different perspectives or emotional impacts.

Questions for Reflection:

- "How does rearranging these phrases change their impact or our understanding of them?"
- "What new insights or emotions emerge from this new configuration?"
- "How might we arrange these to reflect our shared experiences or insights?"
- "What new meanings emerge as we combine these phrases?"
- "What single word or phrase best captures the essence of our created text?"
- "How does this theme relate to our lives or the initial poem?"

Record New Thoughts: Write down highlights from the discussion about the new poem in words and fragments. Use this to determine themes and trends.

Finding the Thread: Work collaboratively to identify a common theme or emotional thread that runs through the newly formed text. Decide on a word or phrase that encapsulates this essence, such as "resilience," "community," or "identity."

Synthesizing and Concluding: Reflect on how the theme relates to the group's experiences and the initial poem. Discuss how this theme could be relevant to broader personal or community contexts.

Questions for Deeper Engagement:

- "What single word or phrase best captures the essence of our discussions today?"
- "How does this theme connect with our lives outside this session?"

EXPLORE AND FOLLOW-UP

EXPLORE AND FOLLOW-UP

02

KEEP IN TOUCH

Continuing the Conversation: Provide each participant with a copy of the newly created text and a summary of the discussion. Schedule follow-up sessions to revisit these themes or explore new texts, maintaining the momentum of engagement.

Establishing Networks: Consider creating formal or informal networks or groups that can sustain these conversations, thereby expanding the impact and reach of the initial engagements.

Questions to Guide Future Planning:

- "What are some ways we can continue exploring these themes together?"
- "How can we involve more community members in our next session?"

Ongoing Dialogue and Interaction: Encourage ongoing dialogue among participants through various platforms—such as social media groups, regular meetups, or digital forums. This ensures that the sense of community and mutual respect continues to evolve and adapt.

Closure and Continuous Engagement: Encourage participants to reflect further on the group-created text or use it as a prompt for personal or collective projects. Offer to reconvene to discuss new insights or additional texts. Conclude by reflecting on the process and its impact. Encourage participants to express how the activity may have shifted their perspectives or deepened their connections. Reinforce the value of each person's contribution and remind the group of the sacred space they created together. Encourage them to carry the themes and feelings discovered today into their everyday interactions.

Questions for Ongoing Engagement:

- "How can we use our group-created text as a springboard for personal or community projects?"
- "What are your thoughts on how this process has influenced your understanding of yourself and others?"

EXPLORE AND FOLLOW-UP

EXPLORE AND FOLLOW-UP

03

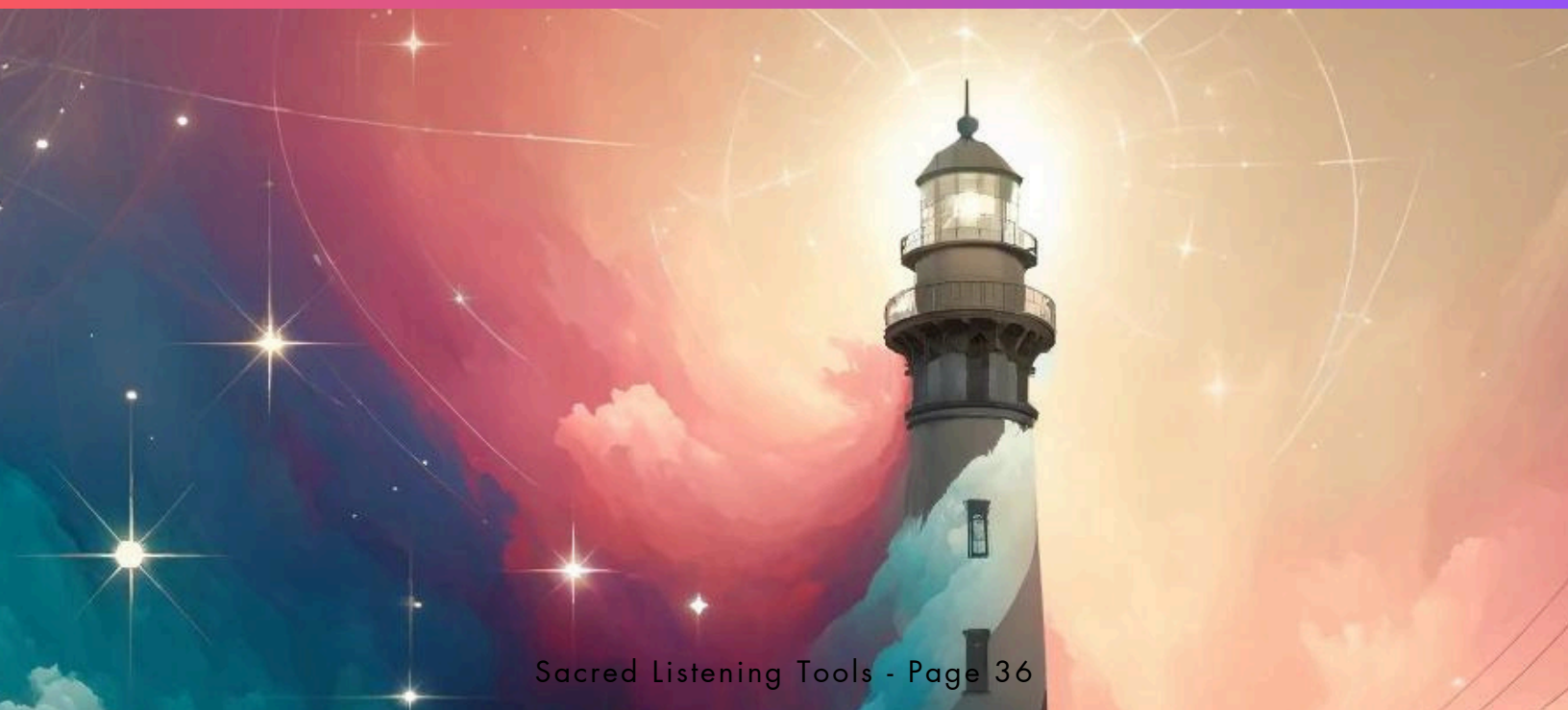
SPREAD THE WORD

Collaborative Art Projects: Use the themes identified in the group's text as the basis for a collaborative art project, such as a mural, a digital storytelling project, or a series of public performances. Invite community members to contribute, expanding the dialogue initiated in the florilegia sessions.

Inter-group Dialogues: Partner with other groups or organizations to conduct similar Florilegia sessions. This can help compare and contrast different community experiences around similar themes, fostering a broader understanding and empathy across diverse groups.

Digital Platforms for Continued Dialogue: Create a digital platform, like a blog or social media group, where participants can continue to post new sparklets, assemble texts, and discuss themes. This platform could invite contributions from a global audience, thereby broadening the impact and diversity of the dialogue.

Educational Workshops: Develop workshops for schools, libraries, or community centers based on the Florilegia method. These workshops can teach others how to use poetry and personal reflection to explore identity and community, extending the reach of the original group's insights.





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 the LGBTQ community, 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 LGBTQ 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 LGBTQ children. 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 LGBTQ.

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.

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.

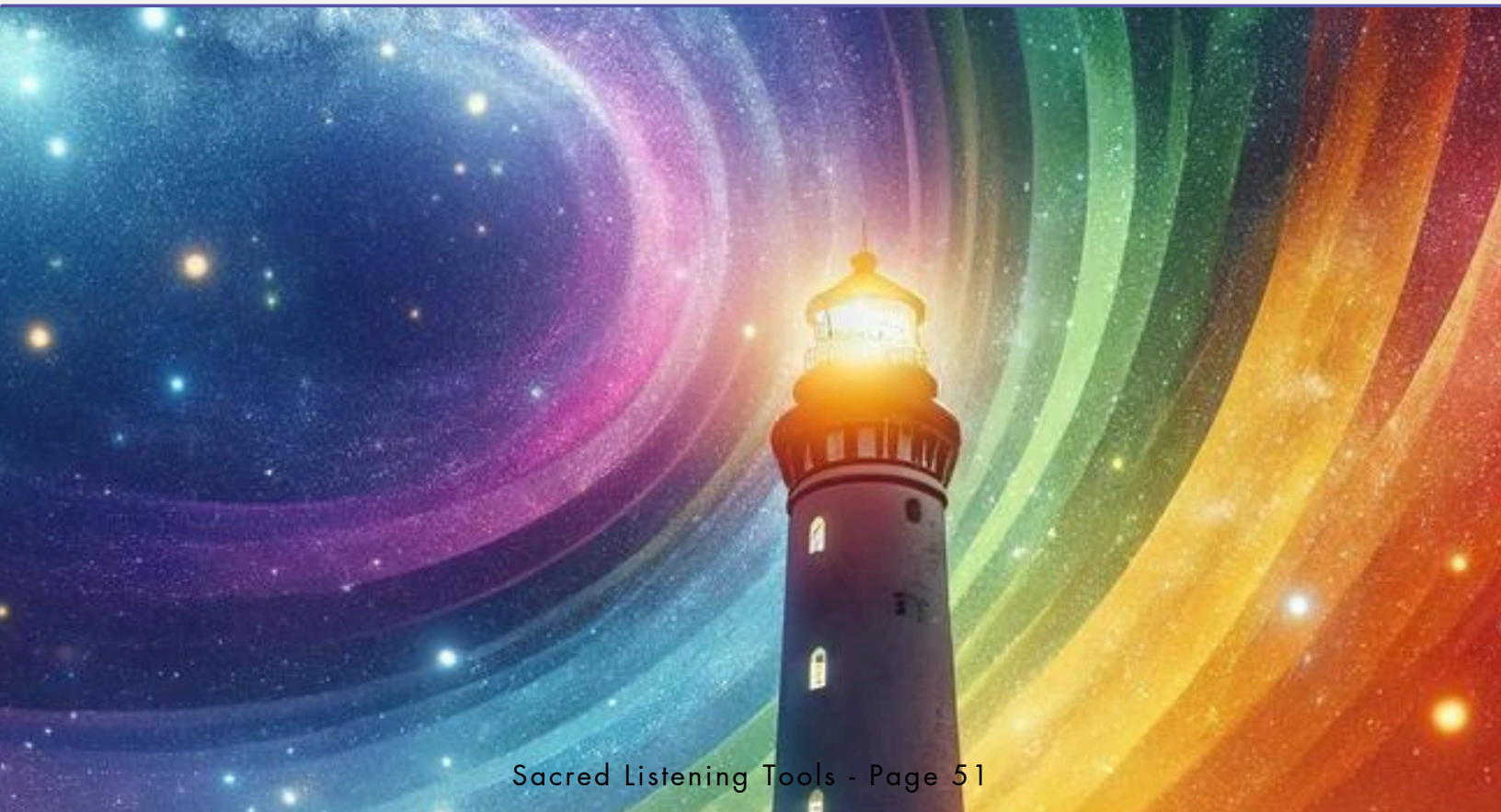
EXPLORE AND FOLLOW-UP

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.





ACTIVITY: SNAPSHOTS OF BELONGING

PURPOSE

The Snapshots of Belonging activity is a vibrant tapestry woven from the diverse threads of personal stories and perspectives, particularly from our LGBTQ youth and community members within the church setting that houses our group. The core of this project—and indeed, all our endeavors—is rooted deeply in listening. Not just hearing, but truly listening to what each individual has to say.

This project is not just about snapping pictures; it's about capturing the essence of our shared and individual experiences, about seeing the world through another's eyes, and recognizing the sacredness in every one of us. It's about understanding that we're all made from the same cosmic dust and that each of us carries a universe within.

Why does this matter? In a world brimming with constant noise and often dominated by voices that drown out the marginalized, creating spaces for silent voices to echo is profound. The church environment, while spiritually enriching for some, might seem alienating for others, especially non-religious LGBTQ youth. This initiative aims to bridge that gap, to foster a mutual understanding and respect that transcends religious and sexual identities. By engaging both the youth and the community members in a non-religious, yet deeply meaningful activity, we not only showcase the universality of human experiences but also celebrate the diversity within them.

The use of photography as the medium of expression is particularly poignant. A photograph can often communicate what words cannot. It can evoke emotions and insights and can do so in a way that is accessible and relatable to everyone, regardless of age, background, or creed. Each participant is armed with a camera, tasked with capturing images under themes like "Expressions of Joy" or "Places of Belonging." These themes are intentionally broad, allowing for a wide interpretation that reflects the vast spectrum of personal realities and stories within our community.

PURPOSE

But the activity isn't just about taking photos. It's structured around our sacred listening process, which ensures that every participant feels heard and valued. We start by establishing a sacred space, making clear that every participant enters as equals, each a vital part of the narrative we are creating together. We set the tone with opening remarks and shared readings that resonate with universal themes of human existence and community, ensuring everyone starts from a place of reflection and respect.

As the photos are taken and then shared, the project transitions into meaningful dialogue. Participants share why they chose their particular subjects, what those images represent to them, and how they relate to the overarching themes. It's about digging deeper, asking why these moments matter, what they tell us about ourselves and each other, and how they reflect our shared humanity. This dialogue is supported by detailed note-taking, ensuring that every insight and emotion shared is captured and acknowledged.

Finally, the project doesn't end when the photos are shared. We analyze the discussions, identifying common themes and new understandings that have emerged. We look at how these insights can build ongoing connections and foster a deeper community spirit. Follow-ups are crucial; they are the threads that keep the weave tight and strong. We plan future sessions and activities based on the themes identified, ensuring that the dialogue continues, relationships grow, and understanding deepens.

This project encapsulates our commitment to listening and understanding as pivotal to community building. It's a practical demonstration of our belief that every individual is a universe of stories worth exploring and that together, we can create a mosaic of shared experiences and mutual respect. Through this Photovoice project, we not only see through each other's lenses but also learn to view our differences as strengths, weaving a community tapestry richer and more vibrant than before.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- [ ] Digital cameras, Polaroid cameras or smartphones
- [ ] Notebooks and pens for journaling and note-taking
- [ ] Large display boards or a digital projector for sharing photographs
- [ ] Sticky notes and markers for labeling and commenting on photos during discussions
- [ ] Comfortable seating arrangements, ideally chairs that can be easily moved into circles or small groups
- [ ] Decorative items that reflect the theme “We are all made of star stuff” and non-religious symbols of community
- [ ] Computer and printer for producing copies of photos if a live digital display is not available
- [ ] Snacks and beverages to keep participants energized and comfortable
- [ ] Name tags for all participants
- [ ] Sound system for playing background music or for use during presentations if necessary
- [ ] Consent forms for photography and sharing of images and stories

SET UP

Crafting Invitations

- Personalized Invitations: Design invitations that reflect the inclusive spirit of the project. Use language that emphasizes unity and the shared wonder of existence, such as "Join us in celebrating our shared journey through the lens of our diverse experiences. Together, let's discover the stories and sights of our community, illustrating how we are all made from the same star stuff."
- Community Outreach: Distribute invitations through both the youth group's and the church's networks, ensuring a broad reach. Include a brief description of the project's goal to bridge community and youth perspectives through photography, highlighting the secular nature of the activity.

Venue Preparation

- Arrange the venue to facilitate easy movement and interaction:
  - Set up chairs in a circle for the initial discussions and welcome circle.
  - Prepare smaller, flexible seating arrangements for the group discussion phases.
- Set up a central table for snacks and beverages in an accessible area.
- Create a display area where photos can be posted or projected.

Technology Setup

- Test all digital cameras or smartphones to ensure they are fully charged and functioning.
- Set up the projector or display boards for viewing photos.
- Prepare a computer with appropriate software for viewing and possibly printing photographs.

Materials Distribution

- Place notebooks, pens, and sticky notes at each participant's seat or in a common area easily accessible to everyone.
- Distribute name tags at the entrance for participants to fill out upon arrival.

Documentation and Consent

- Have consent forms ready at the registration table for participants to sign, clarifying the use of their photographs and stories.

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

Venue Setup: Arrange the venue in a circle to facilitate open dialogue and equal visibility. Decorate with non-religious symbols of community and unity, perhaps using items brought by participants as mentioned in the invitation.

Welcome Circle: Begin with introductions where each participant shares their name, a little about themselves, and their thoughts on the theme "We are all made of star stuff". This sets a tone of shared humanity and openness.

INTENTIONS

02 SET THE TONE

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:

Today, we're embarking on the Snapshots of Belonging activity, which is all about truly seeing and listening to each other. Through the lens of a camera, we’ll capture moments that reflect our personal experiences and the essence of who we are, especially within our diverse community. This isn’t just about taking pictures; it’s about understanding each other’s stories and finding connection in our shared humanity. As we share these images, we’ll engage in deep conversations that help us appreciate the unique perspectives each of us brings, fostering a stronger, more inclusive community. This activity shows care by making sure every voice is heard and valued, helping us all feel a sense of belonging.

Opening Discussion: Facilitate a moderated discussion on the power of visual storytelling and its impact on community understanding and empathy.

Prompts for Discussion: Engage the group with questions like "How can photographs convey stories that words cannot?" and "What does empathy look like in a community setting?"

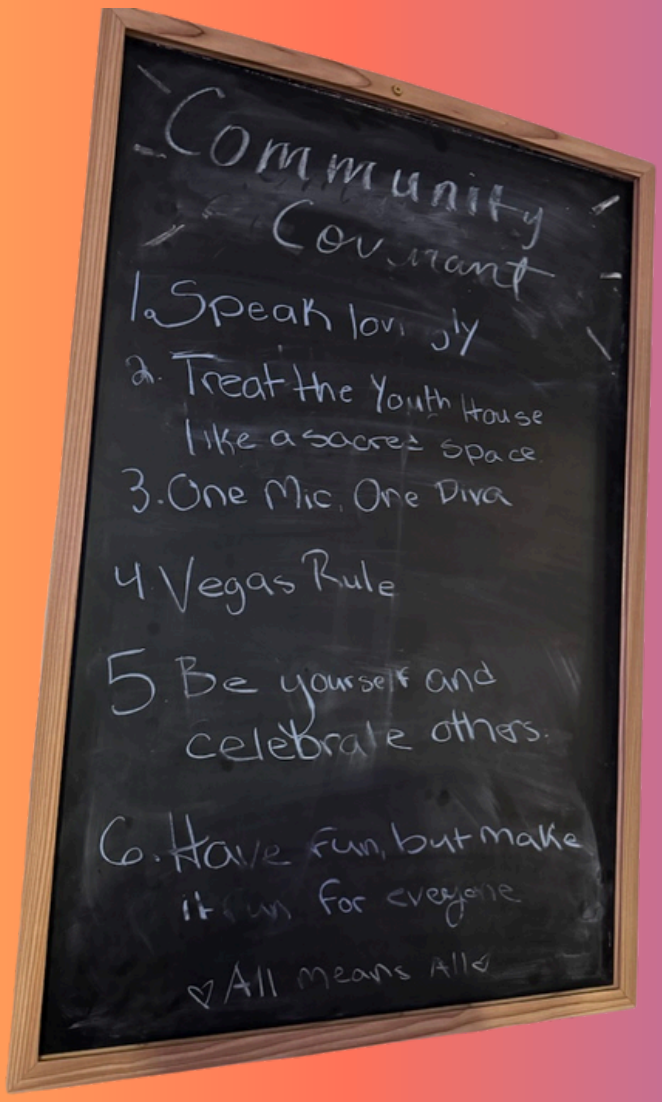
INTENTIONS

03 ENGAGE THROUGH RITUALS

Shared Reading: Share the Lighthouse Covenant with the community group to make them feel like they belong and to demonstrate the values of the space.

Artifact: Alternatively, have each person come with an item or visual representation of your desired theme. It could be “Community”, “Belonging”, “Identity”, etc.

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.



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

Guidelines for Participation: Discuss the importance of respecting each other's perspectives during the photo sessions and sharing. Emphasize that each photograph contributes to a larger narrative.

Group Dynamics: Form pairs or small groups, mixing community members and youth, to encourage diverse interactions. Each group should discuss their photo choices together, fostering a rich dialogue.

Role Clarification: Assign roles for note-taking and facilitating within each small group to ensure that the session's dynamics are balanced and productive.



ASK AND RECORD

02

ASK GREAT QUESTIONS

Guided Theme Exploration: Guide a discussion with the group about prompts or suggest themes that encourage participants to capture images that resonate with themes such as "Expressions of Joy," "Places of Belonging," or "Symbols of Identity." Suggest themes that resonate universally, such as "Community," "Identity," "Resilience," or "Joy". These themes should allow participants to explore their lives and the lives of others.

Window into my world: Encourage participants to capture images that invite others to experience *what it's like be them* - an image or two each day for a period of time of the important people, places, activities, or moments that make up their life right now.

Aspect Assignments: Assign specific aspects under each theme, like "Symbols of Strength" or "Places of Peace," encouraging participants to think about what these concepts mean to them personally and communally.

Photo Taking Instructions: Each individual participant is given a camera or uses their smartphone. They are tasked to capture images around agreed-upon prompts or use questions to guide the exercise such as:

- "Capture something that you feel represents 'community'."
- "Find an object or scene that resonates with your personal identity within this shared space."
- "What does 'identity' look like to you?"
- "What places or people make you feel 'at home'?"

Interactive Photo Assignments: After individual photo capturing, assign collaborative photo tasks where youths and community members pair up to capture images, encouraging them to engage with and learn from each other's perspectives.

ASK AND RECORD

02

ASK GREAT QUESTIONS

Reflective Pairing: After taking photos, pair participants to discuss their images and write joint reflections. This pairing encourages direct dialogue and helps bridge understanding between different experiences. Participants share their photos with each other and discuss the stories behind them. Use open-ended questions like:

- "What inspired you to choose this subject?"
- "How does this image represent a part of your world?"
- "What emotions or thoughts do you associate with this photo?"

Record words, phrases, ideas, funny moments, meaningful thoughts, etc. below.

ASK AND RECORD

03

WRITE IT DOWN

Note-Taking: Ensure detailed notes are taken during the photo sharing and discussion phases to capture the essence of each story and the perspectives shared.

I**mmediate Reflection**: Allow time for participants to reflect independently on the photos and discussions, encouraging them to write or draw responses that capture their immediate thoughts and feelings.

EXPLORE AND FOLLOW-UP

01 LOOK BACK AND LEARN

Debrief Session: Gather all participants to collectively as a large group to review the photos and notes. Discuss the insights and common themes that emerged, and how these themes connect to the broader community experience.

Structured Photo Discussions: Facilitate sessions where each pair presents their photographs and discusses the stories behind them. Focus the dialogue on understanding and connecting the stories to larger community themes.

Discussion Questions: "What new understanding did you gain from your partner's photos?" and "How do these images collectively enhance our understanding of 'community'?"

Group Discussion: Facilitate a larger group discussion to explore common themes and insights from the small group photo sharing. Use questions like:

- "What common values did you see reflected in all of these images?"
- "How do these photos help us see our community through others' eyes?"

Identifying Common Threads: As a large group, work together to identify recurring themes or new insights that could help foster understanding and cohesiveness within the group. Record the key words on a large white board or shared virtual document.

Discussion and Reflection: Use guided discussions to delve deeper into the themes. Questions like "What common themes did you notice in these photos?" and "How do these images challenge or change your view of our community?" can prompt thoughtful reflection.

Highlight Patterns and Stories: Summarize the patterns and stories that emerged, emphasizing the commonalities and unique perspectives that contribute to the community's richness.

Visual Presentation: Create a visual representation of these themes using the photos and quotes from the session to illustrate the interconnectedness of the participants' experiences.
OR
Gallery Walk: Create a space where all photos are displayed. Invite broader community members to view and discuss the photos, facilitating dialogue between viewers and photographers.

EXPLORE AND FOLLOW-UP

EXPLORE AND FOLLOW-UP

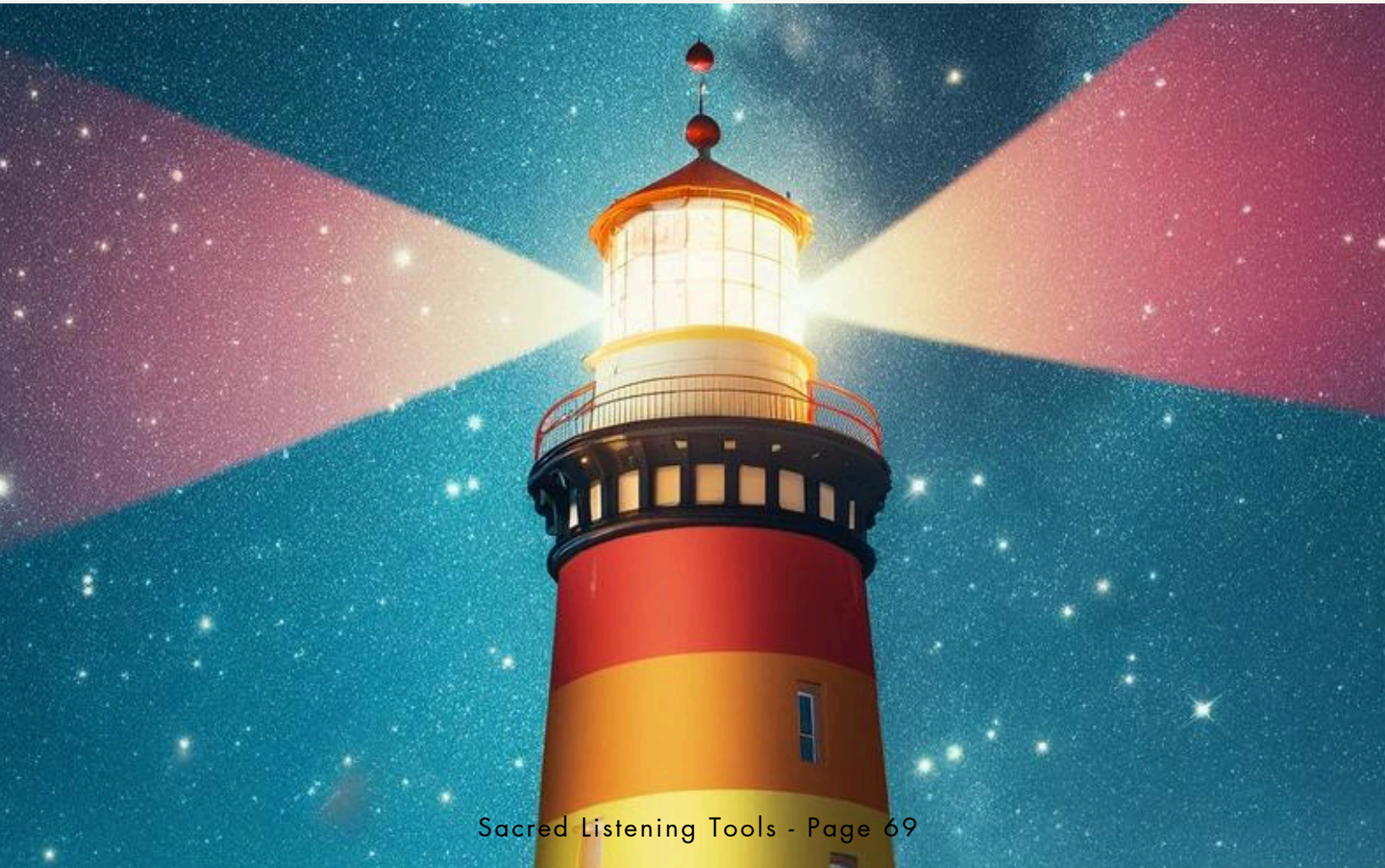
02 KEEP IN TOUCH

Feedback Loop: Establish a mechanism for participants to provide feedback on the session and suggest topics or activities for future gatherings.

Continuing the Conversation: Set up periodic thematic photo challenges that encourage ongoing participation and dialogue. Consider a shared online gallery or a social media page where new photos and themes can be introduced regularly.

Ongoing Dialogue: Encourage the formation of a digital forum or social media group where participants can continue to share photos and stories, maintaining the momentum of the initial session.

Continued Thematic Exploration: Set up future meetings or sessions that build on the themes identified, ensuring continued engagement and deeper exploration of the relationships formed.



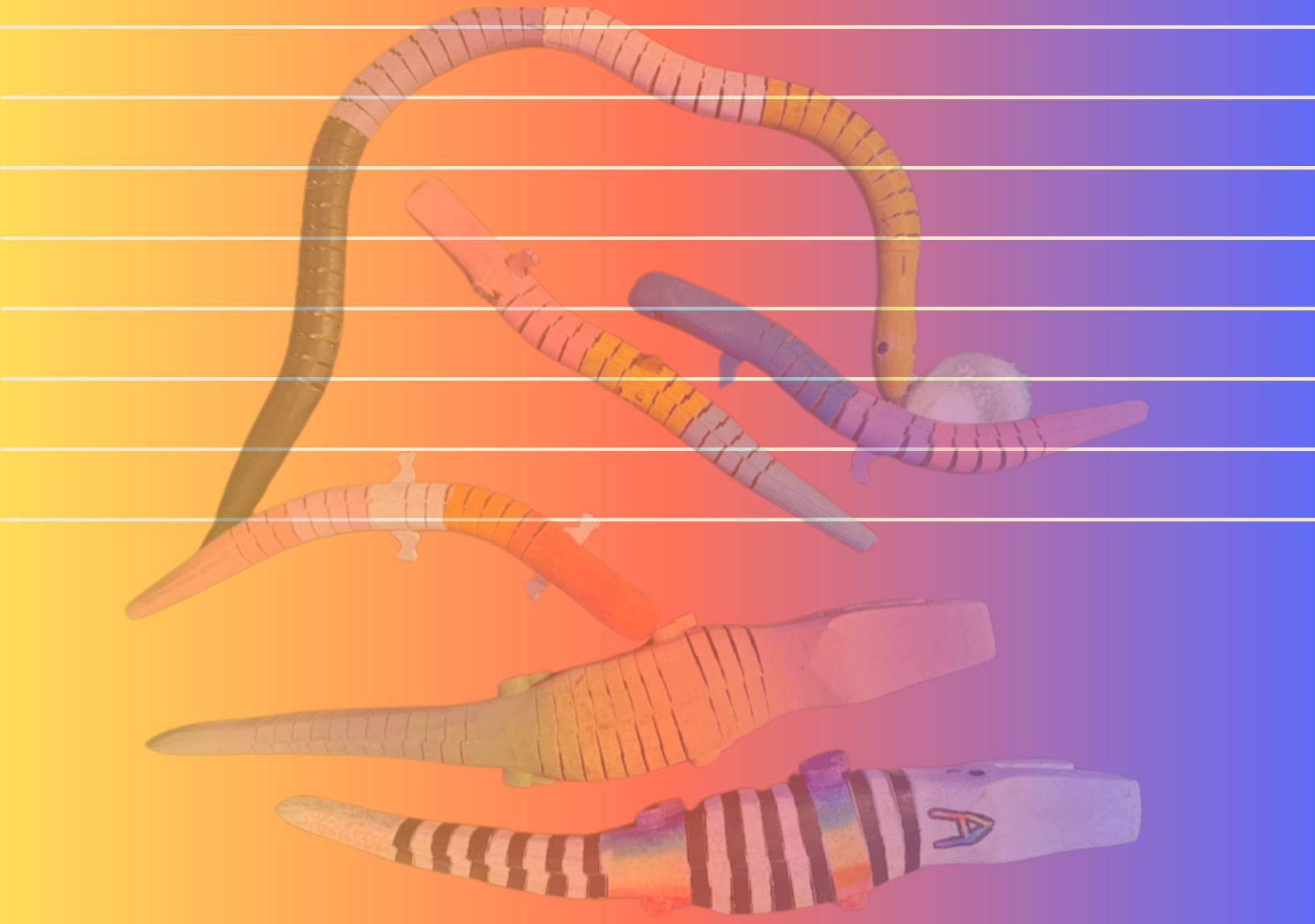
EXPLORE AND FOLLOW-UP

03 SPREAD THE WORD

Community Showcase: Organize a public exhibition of the project's photographs and stories to engage a wider audience and invite new participants into the dialogue. Include panel discussions or Q&A sessions where participants can discuss their work and its impact with an audience.

Expand Networks: Develop partnerships with local organizations to extend the reach of the project, fostering broader community ties and support networks.

Outline below the ways you can use what you did in this activity to engage more of the community or new partnerships that can help support the young people of the Lighthouse.





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?

FLAGLER COLLEGE

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