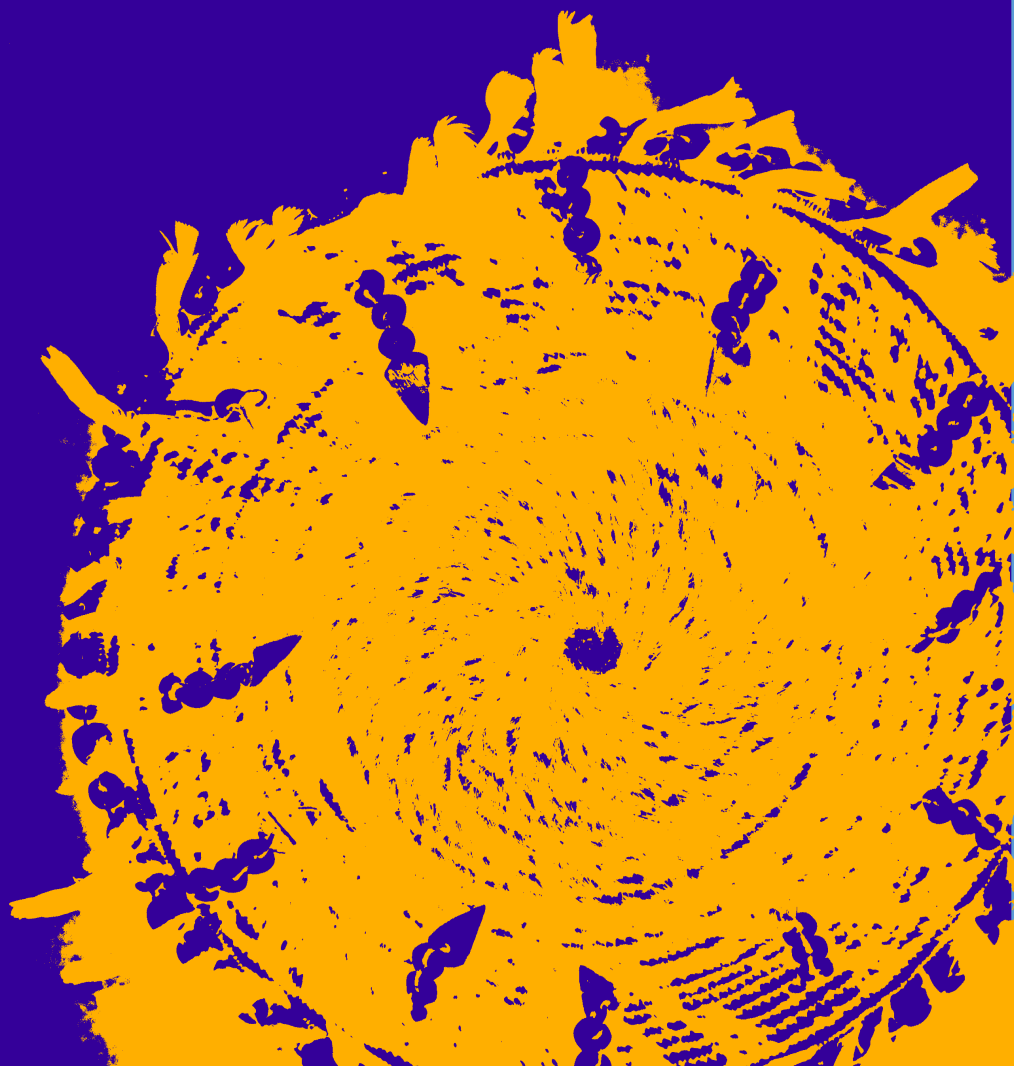


April 1, 2021

# Measuring Spiritual Well-Being

A briefing for scholars researching  
well-being, spirituality and social  
connection

Sacred  
Design Lab



# Introduction

This briefing is written for researchers and academics focused on well-being, spirituality and social connection and explains the process, conclusions and recommendations following the testing of Sacred Design Lab's spiritual well-being assessment prototype.

In 2020, thanks to a grant from [Well Being Trust](#), Sacred Design Lab conducted a pilot of a spiritual well-being assessment with a two-fold research purpose:

1. Can we create a questionnaire that will accurately assess spiritual health across the areas of belonging, becoming, and beyond, and resource participants to make meaningful personal progress in each of these areas?
2. Can we create a questionnaire that gives participants an experience of spiritual well-being while taking it?

Over 1,000 respondents took our assessment in the latter months of 2020. It had 80 questions that covered the three areas of belonging, becoming, and beyond, as well as overall spiritual well-being. After taking it, participants were given a response based on their score, ranging from “spiritually struggling” to “spiritually flourishing.” This was accompanied by a resource entitled Pathways to Spiritual Well-Being, with recommended resources and practices--translated from religious and wisdom traditions--for enhancing spiritual well-being at any stage.

## 1. Why Measuring Spiritual Well-Being Matters

As growing numbers of Americans disaffiliate from religious institutions and we continue to see a rise in the rates of social isolation and its associated impacts, our work has sought to discover how we might increase levels of spiritual well-being.

By spiritual well-being, we mean a dynamic state of soul health, cultivated through ongoing experiences of belonging, becoming, and beyond.

- *Belonging*: Knowing and being known; loving and being loved
- *Becoming*: Growing into the people we are called to be
- *Beyond*: Experiencing ourselves as part of something more

In our research and convening of practitioners across religious faiths and secular identities, we've seen again and again the challenge of measuring the things that matter most. This is true for individuals interested in their own spiritual well-being, and for community leaders who are eager to track the levels of spiritual well-being among the members of their communities and congregations.

The value of this potential measurement opens up systemic possibilities that would significantly strengthen the spiritual community landscape. For example, if congregations were able to capture the experience of belonging provided by membership of a synagogue or church, might we see a willingness from health funders to invest in religious communities as a provider of public health goods? If fitness communities were able to point to data that demonstrated the way in which participation in the gym increases civic participation, might we see a renewed interest in these local communities from funders interested in democracy and equity? Many of the most promising new communities we've seen emerge struggle to build a sustainable financial model. Capturing the real value they create would significantly widen the pool of funding available to them.

## 2. Where Existing Social Science Works

We are, of course, far from the first to ask these questions. A review of existing instruments revealed two categories of assessment that we could learn from. The first was well-being research scales, and the second was personal reflection tools commonly used by spirituality practitioners and individuals interested in their own spiritual well-being.

We began by searching for existing well-being scales used in academic research. We found more than 90 such scales and reviewed 15 of the most widely used and tested scales that seemed most closely related to the concepts of belonging, becoming, and beyond. We looked to discover:

- What factors or domains comprised their version of well-being and what rationale lay behind it?
- How were items selected and worded, and what response options were used? Who used the scale and for what purposes?
- How operationally useful was it for practitioners? What scientific testing was done (e.g., reliability, validity, sensitivity), and what did they find?

To illustrate a specific example, the [Human Flourishing Program at Harvard University](#) developed a 12-item flourishing measure in 2017 that is based around five central domains: happiness and life satisfaction, mental and physical health, meaning and purpose, character and virtue, and close social relationships (VanderWeele, 2017). The rationale behind selecting these domains is that each is nearly universally desired and each constitutes an end in and of itself. The scale also includes two items around financial and material stability since they may be necessary to sustain the other domains over time. The researchers plan to use this scale as a key outcome measure within an ambitious study that seeks to assess the causes of flourishing across the globe (using a yearly, representative panel of 300,000 individuals). Each of the scale's 12 items has a 0-10 Likert response (e.g., 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'; 'not satisfied at all' to 'completely satisfied'). Two studies have been conducted demonstrating scientific properties of the scale in workplace settings (Węziak-Białowolska et al., 2019a) and cross-cultural settings (Węziak-Białowolska et al., 2019b)

A second source we took inspiration from is the [Enriched Life Scale](#) (ELS) developed by researchers from [Team Red, White & Blue](#), a nonprofit that serves American veterans (Team Red, White, & Blue, 2017). The ELS is a 40-item tool that measures five constructs: genuine relationships, sense of purpose, engaged citizenship, mental health, and physical health. The scale was developed using a theory-based framework for veteran health called the Enrichment Equation. An example item for the genuine relationships construct is, "I have close, best-friend types of relationships." Each of the scale's 40 items has a five-point Likert response (either "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" or "completely untrue" to "completely true"). The scientific properties of the scale were tested on veteran and civilian samples (Angel et al., 2018), with more tests forthcoming to explore extending its use to diverse settings.

In reviewing the 15 instruments, several patterns emerged regarding the factors or domains that comprise well-being.

1. First, related to Sacred Design Lab's concept of 'belonging,' we saw a strong emphasis on social well-being across scales, albeit often conceptualized or framed somewhat differently, such as genuine relationships, close relationships, community engagement, social support, (lack of) loneliness, or perceived cohesion.
2. Regarding our concept of 'becoming,' we saw a strong emphasis on sense of purpose and sense of meaning across scales. In some scales, we also saw related domains such as engagement, resilience, competence, and vitality.
3. Regarding our concept of 'beyond,' we found fewer related domains; the closest might be 'transcendence' and 'spiritual openness' (both of which comprise the [Scale of Spiritual Transcendence](#) [Piotrowski, 2013]). Other potentially related domains include gratefulness and optimism. Overall, though, 'beyond' seems largely unaccounted for in many of the most widely used well-being-type scales.

### 3. Where Existing Social Science Falls Short

Scientific scales used in research seldom are practically applicable for community leaders, and usually don't inspire individuals to take steps toward spiritual well-being. Respondents typically fill out the survey then forget about it; they rarely receive useful information or feel prompted to reflect. Even with well-being scales, most respondents find the experience closer to tedious than to meaningful. These instruments primarily benefit researchers; the experience rarely serves individuals or communities in helping them reflect on or align with what matters to them.

Further, many scientific measures that assess well-being seem to leave out certain domains that we see as critical to spiritual well-being. As an example, our conception of belonging includes place, ancestry, and story, which is often missing in relationship-focused measures. As an even more prominent example, most well-being measures seem to leave out entirely what we call 'beyond': experiencing ourselves as part of something more. And even among those scales that specifically focus on spiritual well-being, they often view spiritual well-being as synonymous with religiosity (and that religiosity is nearly always Christian). Such scales seldom work well across a diversity of participants who might affiliate with various religious traditions and worldviews, including the non-religious, atheists, and people who belonging to multiple spiritualities.

We therefore sought inspiration from another set of instruments designed less for the purpose of scientific research and more to benefit practitioners and participants. We reviewed 14 instruments of this type spanning a wide range of contexts and purposes. Popular examples include the [Enneagram](#), [StrengthsFinder](#), and the [Intercultural Development Inventory](#). The primary advantage of these types of instruments is their useful feedback for respondents and/or community leaders. These instruments minimally provide respondents a summary of their results; in the best cases, they provide individuals and communities with resonant, personally meaningful insights that they can carry forward into their lives and work.

We took greatest inspiration from three sources:

1. [Saddleback's Spiritual Health Assessment and Spiritual Health Planner](#), which is a 35-item tool tracking for its congregants "five vital signs of a healthy spiritual life" at a particular point in time. "It is not a tool to see how you measure up against other people; nor is it a tool to see how close you are to perfection. [...] Rather, this is a tool that will help you evaluate your spiritual health and give you direction." An example item from the assessment is "I am the same person in public as I am in private." We especially appreciated and borrowed from the "crawl, walk, run" format of the Spiritual Health Planner.

2. The U.S. Army's Spiritual Assessment Tool (not public), which is a new 19-item tool developed and used by U.S. Army CH (CPT) Bryan Hedrick. Much attention was given to making feedback from the tool useful, allowing a chaplain to provide direct, immediate input on results and to quickly develop a tailored "spiritual performance program" for an individual or unit. The tool assesses spiritual performance across two dimensions: beliefs/values and behaviors. Example items include "My faith/beliefs help explain when negative things happen in my life" and "How often do you engage in activities that build the human spirit (i.e., prayer, meditation, fasting, listening to inspirational music, nature, journaling, giving to charity, etc.)?" The tool's designers performed analyses on the scale's scientific properties; the results have not yet been submitted for publication.
3. [The Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance's Wellness Wheel](#), which is "an easy-to-use tool that gives you a complete picture of the progress you've already made in your wellness journey. As you create your own wheel, you will see your strengths in perspective and discover ways to move toward the life you want to live." One of the Wheel's 7 domains is "Spiritual," and it is assessed with 4 items such as "I have a strong sense of meaning in my life." The website includes a page with suggestions for actions to take, a worksheet, and links to resources.

Through reviewing these instruments and through expert interviews with the tool designers, we arrived at the following principles & aims for designing our spiritual well-being tool:

- We aim for our items to be heartening, resonant, and personally significant. At this prototype phase, this takes precedence over being able to scientifically validate the items. We aim for the items to inspire and to prompt reflection, not just to collect information.
- We aim to create a tool that goes in-depth on spiritual well-being across a diversity of participants/groups. We ambitiously aim for the tool to work as well for deeply religious people as it does for atheists, non-theists, and 'nones'.
- We aim to create a tool that provides useful, practical, non-threatening feedback, and that can be revisited again at a later time. More than measuring performance, the purpose is to prompt reflection and provide insights that people can carry forward into their lives and work.

## 4. What We Learned From This Prototype

### 4.1 Statistical Analysis

Below we highlight some of our findings.

- *Score ranges.* Response options were the same for each item: ( 5 ) Yes, ( 4 ) Mostly, ( 3 ) Somewhat, ( 2 ) Not really, and ( 1 ) No. In our sample, the lowest overall score across all respondents was 2.8, and the lowest scores for the categories were as follows: 2.3 for belonging, 2.2 for becoming, 2.5 for beyond, and 2.1 for general. The highest score was 5.0 (one respondent answered ‘Yes’ to each item).
- *Average scores.* The mean score was 4.0 (‘Mostly’) across all items and for each category (except for the general category, which had a mean of 3.9).
- *Correlations.* Nearly all of the 80 items had a positive correlation with one another, with the average correlation across all pairs 0.28. The lowest correlation between any two items was only -0.03 (between “I have relationships that help me feel alive and energized” and “I long to be closer to something larger than myself”). Examples of items that were highly correlated include the following:

*“My life as a whole has meaning” and “Even considering how big the universe is, I can say that my life matters” (.74 correlation)*

*“In my soul, all is well” and “I generally feel a sense of inner peace” (.70 correlation)*

*“I feel purposeful in my life” and “I am becoming the person I long to be” (.68 correlation).*

An example of a surprising correlation was between *“In my heart, I know I belong”* and *“There are a few people who really know me and love me.”* While we would have expected these items to be highly correlated, the correlation was only 0.15. This is notable, too, because the former item was highly correlated with the overall score (.66) while the latter was not (.22). We suspect part of the reason for this difference is that the latter item had one of the highest average scores (4.6), thus there was not much variability in the responses.

- *Factor analysis.* We performed a few informal factor analyses to see how the items cluster together. The belonging items largely seemed to split into two groups, which we might roughly call something like ‘relationship quality’ and ‘self stability’. The becoming items split into multiple groups which we might roughly call ‘service’, ‘purpose’, ‘self stability’, and ‘learning & teaching.’ Most of the beyond items hung together, with a couple maybe better fitting in a group called something like ‘traditions.’ More details are available upon request.
- *Association with religious identity.* Religious identity was associated with the results in some ways. Lower than average scores were reported by those who identified as atheist (3.5), ‘nothing in particular’ (3.6), and agnostic (3.8). Those who identified as atheists scored particularly low on the beyond category (3.2), particularly on the following items: “*I’ve had a transcendent experience that continues to inform the direction of my life*” (1.9), “*I feel connected to tradition(s) that help(s) me make meaning of my life*” (2.5), “*I identify with my ancestry*” (2.6), and “*In the midst of everyday tasks, I can feel connected to something bigger than myself*” (2.6). Interestingly, those who identified as ‘spiritual but not religious’ had similar scores to those who identified as Protestant or Jewish (all were 4.1).

A full list of questions can be found in Appendix 7.1.

## 4.2 Focus Group

In addition to the statistical analysis of the data, we invited respondents based in California to join focus groups to share their experience of answering the questions and exploring the Pathways to Spiritual Well-Being document (Appendix 7.2). This was a focus of ours as we wanted the process of exploring the survey to, itself, contribute to participant spiritual well-being.

Enthusiasm was high. With eight spots available, 27 offered to participate. The make-up of the focus groups were similar to the survey participants’ as a whole:

- Five white people, 3 people of color
- Six women, 2 men
- Participants skewed to those actively pursuing spiritual well-being and included one ordained minister

Overwhelmingly, the response to the experience of taking the survey was positive. A reflective sample of comments include:

- “*I remember calling my best friend while I was taking it, sharing with her that it felt like a way to assess where I am in my spiritual growth.*”

- *“I was impressed at the breadth and depth of it. The way it affirmed how multilayered spiritual well-being is or might be, and all the different ways into spiritual well-being. I thought it was a rather elegant way to capture different dimensions.”*
- *“I felt mostly affirmed, good, like I’m on the right track. I got “spiritually journeying”...I thought I might be earlier. I had the sense that if I continue on this track, it will only help my mental health. I feel like my spirituality and mental health are intertwined.”*

One design concern was the length of time that it might take for participants to complete the 80+ questions. However, when primed before the survey started that respondents might want to set aside 30 minutes and prepare themselves for a process of reflection, we found that participants found the large number of questions easier than expected.

- *“I appreciated that the email told you to set time aside -- that prepared me for what I was going to go through. Instead of immediately getting into, I came back later in the day.”*

The data confirms these insights. The median time spent on the survey was 12 minutes.

Though not all of the participants used, or noticed, the Pathways to Spiritual Well-Being pdf that was emailed to them following their completion of the survey, those who did reflect with it found it a beneficial experience. Comments included:

- *“The tip sheet was very helpful. A spiritual rubric. Where I’m at today might not be where I’m at in a week. If I’m spiritually struggling now, that doesn’t mean I will always be. It was helpful to see the suggestion of stages, where you can go or where you might come from, broken down in categories.”*
- *“I got the pdf and thought it was really helpful. A ton of great exercises, quite dense. I did appreciate that things were actionable - there were calls to action as opposed to just a calibration of “you’re here, now what?!” There’s a lot to take in with that pdf.”*
- *“I loved it. Like 50 different actions! You could dedicate a week to each! I’m a very methodical type person, I might actually do them all. Even to look back at spiritually struggling and ask, have I really done this? Do I have a strong foundation? Then I want to do the 201 level of reflection - go beyond the prompts themselves to doing the layers of reflection they suggest.”*

Any confusion or critique from participants was limited to a small number of issues, including:

- The concept of a score and being placed into stages of spiritual well-being
- The inclusion of some themes (such as peoplehood and service) as examples of *spiritual well-being*, as opposed to other measures of thriving

- A desire to include more specific recommendations for resources in the Pathways to Spiritual Wellbeing document
- The suggestion to include questions about physical and mental health in the demographics section to learn more about the context of participants
- A desire for the reflection process to be social, rather than solitary

#### 4.3 Scalability and Replicability

We see great potential for the questions that make up the instrument to be used by practitioners looking to support the spiritual well-being of others, as well as by individuals who are looking to increase their own spiritual well-being. Whether offered for solo or small group reflection, the questions offer stimulating prompts for exploration, conversation, and meaning-making. They can be successfully replicated as a set, a subset (for example, questions on belonging or beyond), or as single reflection questions. We think the questions would be particularly valuable when paired with the Pathways to Spiritual Wellbeing document.

As a research instrument, there are a few extra steps to complete before it can be used widely.

1. First, psychometric testing (such as validity and reliability) will need to be conducted to ensure the instrument provides sound, accurate information on spiritual well-being. It might be especially important to assess whether the instrument is valid and reliable for all types of religious affiliations and identities.
2. Second, researchers will likely want to create and test a short form of the instrument, reducing it to its most essential items so that it can be used more readily.

## 5. Methodology

Once our review of the scientific literature and approaches to measurement were complete, we deconstructed our definition of spiritual well-being and began to draft questions using the categories of belonging, becoming, and beyond. Our goal was to uncover unique questions that addressed each element of the definition. We compiled a matrix to discover how other instruments attempted to formulate similar questions, and identified gaps where no other tool addressed elements of our definition.

As we continued to hone the syntax, length, and breadth of questions, we began the IRB human subjects research review process through Harvard Divinity School and started to recruit distribution partners for the tool itself. We also recruited and convened two advisory boards to review our approach and language.

The first advisory board consisted of collective liberation experts including Joanna Miller from Asana, Jessica Taubner from the Family Independence Initiative, and Erika Carlsen from Coro Northern California. Their charge was to help us interrogate our assumptions about the design, implementation and analysis of the pilot—specifically along lines of race and class. The second advisory board was a group of social science research experts, including Matthew Lee and Bob Waldinger from Harvard University, Anita Graham from RTI and the University of North Carolina, and Caroline Angel from the Reintegrative Health Initiative. Their focus was to help us build on the best existing research and to stress-test the instrument and our eventual analysis. Their collective insights helped us hone and add questions, shape our practitioner focus, and design for better user experience.

We researched various instrument distribution and analytics software before selecting Typeform for its ease of use and ability to customize response emails to participants.

We then began designing and writing a post-survey “Pathways To Spiritual Well-Being” document, which was key to transforming our instrument from a data collection effort to an engaging tool designed specifically to support growth in spiritual well-being.

As discussed in the literature review section, we were particularly inspired by the Spiritual Health Assessment from Saddleback Church, and sought to replicate its focus on building ladders toward flourishing for participants at all levels of spiritual well-being. The sweet spot we were looking for was to provide enough detailed suggestions for people to make progress while still creating a digestible, easy-to-use roadmap.

Once both the research questions and the Pathways document were completed, we commissioned a Spanish translation to be distributed alongside the English-language versions.

Having invited a number of California-based organizations to amplify our survey participation invitation, including HomeBoy Industries, Moishe House, The Dinner Party, Recovery Cafe, and the Jewish Federation of Los Angeles, we also sent out invitations to participate in the survey through our newsletter (with 3000+ subscribers) and social media channels.

In the final weeks of the survey being open to responses, we reached out to all respondents in the state of California to invite them to participate in one of two focus group conversations (as detailed above.)

We received 1011 submissions in the six week period the survey link was live, from which we were able to use 706 (after accounting for submissions from outside the United States and from those under the age of 18.) From there we removed duplicates bringing us to 693 responses - the total number of responses used in analysis. Participation skewed heavily female, white, and Democrat, and toward those already engaged in exploring spiritual well-being, meaning that the initial statistical analysis can only be used as inspiration for future research and as indications toward the efficacy of spiritual well-being reflection questions.

Nonetheless, we were able to explore the data and draw initial conclusions (as detailed above). On reviewing these statistics, we were heartened to hear the encouragement in our final review session with the Academic Advisory Board who indicated their interest in certain question constructions and suggested that some conclusions from the data were in line with their own studies, such as low levels of engaged citizenship including voting and volunteering.

## 6. Invitation for Further Research

We are delighted that other researchers may want to pick up the baton and further test, adapt or integrate the work we've done so far. The full data set is available on request and the list of questions and Pathways to Spiritual Well-Being document are included in the appendix.

Questions we are eager for others to explore include:

1. Which items contribute the most, and least, to spiritual well-being? (Or which items feel most important to people?)
2. How does this measure correlate with other existing measures? (Comparing spiritual well-being and other outcomes.)
3. What are the instrument's psychometric properties? (Validity, reliability, etc.)
4. Does the instrument prove useful in different political, religious, racial and geographic environments? (We aimed to create a tool that explored spiritual well-being across a diversity of identities. We ambitiously aimed for the tool to work as well for deeply religious people as it does for atheists, non-theists, and 'nones'. We're especially curious if the language we used was itself a barrier for self-identified atheists, for example, or whether there is a substantial experiential difference regarding connection to 'beyond.'
5. To what extent does the survey, or the Pathways document, continue to influence respondents in the following days, weeks and months? Can we measure impact over time? And are responses to the same questions constant over time?

6. How does the impact of the Pathways to Spiritual Well-Being differ when engaged in a small group setting, in contrast to solo reflection?

Among the questions we developed, we see particular potential for these to be further tested because they were highly correlated with the overall spiritual well-being score and because they have not been used in other scales to our knowledge:

1. *“I feel part of a larger story.”*
2. *“In the midst of everyday tasks, I can feel connected to something bigger than myself.”*
3. *“I can find strength and comfort, even in the midst of difficulties.”*

If you're interested in exploring further, we welcome any questions or requests for more information. Please reach out to Casper ter Kuile at [casper@sacred.design](mailto:casper@sacred.design).

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## 8. About Sacred Design Lab

We design for the human soul.

Sacred Design Lab is a soul-centered research and development lab. We're devoted to understanding and designing for 21st-century spiritual well-being. We translate ancient wisdom and practices to help our partners develop products, programs, and experiences that ground people's social and spiritual lives. We specialize in translating across generations, sectors, and paradigms.

### Our Clients



OBAMA  
FOUNDATION

IDEO



### Our Partners



HARVARD DIVINITY SCHOOL



JIM JOSEPH  
FOUNDATION  
Shimon ben Joseph



### Sample Thought Leadership (all available at [sacred.design/insights](https://sacred.design/insights)):

[Design for the Human Soul](#) (2019) articulates a new approach to design, focusing on the ways that unmet soul needs shape our time. The more we go hungry for meaning, connection and purpose, the more we act from isolation and despair. This plays out in the way we live, love, work, and lead. The problem is soul-deep. So, too, must be our response.

[How We Gather](#) (2015) maps the emerging landscape of Millennial communities that are fulfilling the functions that religious congregations used to fill. Grounded in six recurring themes - community, personal transformation, social transformation, purpose-finding, creativity, and accountability - this report has been called the most important non-theological text being read in seminaries today.

[Something More](#) (2016) builds on the analysis of *How We Gather* but looks at new communities at the edge of religious traditions, namely those still claiming an affiliation.

[Faithful](#) (2017) Written especially for denominational leaders across traditions, Faithful considers destabilizing tensions between improving existing models of congregational ministry and re-organizing around emerging leaders and models of religious life.

Care of Souls (2018) our capstone report, brings together four years of research and practice to illustrate seven necessary innovative community leadership roles for this moment. The Gatherer, Healer, Venturer, Elder, Steward, Seer and Maker unbundle and remix the roles of traditional religious leadership and invite the reader to live into new categories of religious life.

## Principals

Angie Thurston, a graduate of Brown University and Harvard Divinity School, is the creator of the Formation Project, a startup offering spiritual development to unaffiliated and spiritually marginalized people by connecting the inner life of spirit to the outer life of social change. She is a Ministry Innovation Fellow at Harvard Divinity School.

Casper ter Kuile is a graduate of both the Kennedy School and Divinity School of Harvard University. He is co-host and co-founder of Harry Potter and the Sacred Text (a podcast with 75,000 downloads per episode, and a largely secular and spiritual but not religious audience). His book The Power of Ritual, was released by HarperOne in 2020. Casper is a Ministry Innovation Fellow at Harvard Divinity School.

Rev. Sue Phillips, a graduate of Colgate University and the Episcopal Divinity School, has served as a denominational executive for the Unitarian Universalist Association and as Director of Strategy for the Impact Lab at the On Being Project. She is a Ministry Innovation Fellow at Harvard Divinity School.



# 9. Appendix

## 9.1 Full list of questions, as presented in the survey

Let's begin with some questions about belonging.

Does this statement describe you?

Yes!

Mostly

Somewhat

Not really

No

Do the following statements describe you?

1. I regularly express how much I love the people close to me, with or without words.
2. I have relationships that help me feel alive and energized.
3. I get to be myself in my closest relationships.
4. There are a few people who really know me and love me.
5. I set healthy limits on what I can offer other people.
6. I regularly take time for rest and relaxation.

7. In general, I am kind to myself.
8. I can think of at least three people who I could call at any time when I need support.
9. To those close to me, I can openly admit the things I'm struggling with.
10. In my closest relationships, I show up when it matters most.
11. I have meaningful opportunities to gather, mourn, and celebrate with loved ones.
12. I foster relationships in my neighborhood and local community.
13. I have important relationships with people much younger and much older than me.
14. I have important relationships with people from beyond my own race and class.
15. I feel connected to family, as I define it.
16. I feel connected to nature, plants, and animals.
17. I feel a sense of home with the land, ocean, or mountains.
18. I feel connected to my language, foods, and customs.
19. I feel part of a bigger circle that goes beyond my own family, community, and neighborhood.
20. I feel seen and accepted outside of my community.
21. I tend to feel compassion for people, even though I do not know them.

22. In general, I do what it takes to resolve tensions in my relationships.

23. In my heart, I know I belong.

24. My people are there for each other.

Thank you! Next up, some questions about how you experience becoming the person you want to be.

Do the following statements describe you?

1. I feel purposeful in my life.

2. I am becoming the person I long to be.

3. I have habits and rituals that make a noticeable positive difference in my life.

4. When I want to learn something that matters to me, I find a way.

5. I get to deepen my most important practices and commitments with others who share them.

6. I have opportunities to share what I have learned about life.

7. The more I learn, the more I realize I still have to learn.

8. I regularly take time for creativity and play.

9. I regularly find joy in song, dance, or music.

10. I take others under my wing to check in about their progress, struggles, and successes.

11. I regularly take time to reflect on my experiences.
12. I am more at home with myself than I used to be.
13. I have important rituals in my life to help mark moments of transition, celebration, or sadness.
14. I take unpopular stands to defend my principles and what's right.
15. I am discovering and expressing who I really am.
16. I invite others to help me keep my commitments.
17. I can be aware of the places where I fall short in life without being overly self-critical.
18. Sometimes I feel like a teacher and sometimes like a student.
19. I have reliable ways to move from hurt to healing.
20. I have practices that help me connect to my body.
21. Instead of harshly judging others, I try to understand them and my responses to their actions.
22. I look for ways to serve others, regardless of whether I get credit for it.
23. My own challenges motivate me to show up for others in their struggles.
24. I find meaning in care-giving to others in my life.
25. My daily actions and decisions are grounded in my deepest commitments.
26. My people lift each other up.

Thank you! Next up, some questions about how you experience being part of something bigger than yourself.

Do the following statements describe you?

1. I am connected to that which is beyond myself.
2. I've had a transcendent experience that continues to inform the direction of my life.
3. I seek out places that feel sacred.
4. I seek out experiences of awe and wonder.
5. I seek out conversations that orient around meaning, purpose, and connection to something more.
6. In the midst of everyday tasks, I can feel connected to something bigger than myself.
7. I feel connected to stories from a long time ago.
8. I identify with my ancestry.
9. I feel connected to tradition(s) that help(s) me make meaning of my life.
10. There are wise people in my life who I turn to for guidance.
11. I mentor and accompany younger people in important life questions.
12. There are people like me who I look up to and who inspire me.

13. I feel part of a larger story.
14. I rely on stories and strategies of resilience from people who have survived similar experiences.
15. I have hope for a flourishing future for my people.
16. I have ways of exploring life's big questions.
17. I regularly redirect my attention to my heart and body.
18. I can find strength and comfort, even in the midst of difficulties.
19. I long to be closer to something larger than myself.
20. I feel grateful for something every day.
21. I am curious in the face of paradox and mystery.
22. I am open to things that are beyond my current understanding.

Nearly finished! A few final questions about your overall spiritual well-being.

Do the following statements describe you?

1. In my soul, all is well.
2. My life as a whole has meaning.
3. Even considering how big the universe is, I can say that my life matters.

4. Looking at my life as a whole, things seem clear to me.
5. I generally feel a sense of inner peace.
6. I generally feel that my relationships are harmonious.
7. My relationships are more important to me than fame, wealth, or achievement.
8. I actively contribute to the well-being of others.

That's it! Thank you for completing the assessment.

## [9.2 Pathways to Spiritual Well-Being document](#)

See following pages.

Sacred Design Lab

# Pathways to Spiritual Well Being

We invite you to reflect on the suggestions that follow. Look for the column that matches your state of spiritual well being and see if there are things you want to try. After that, feel free to explore!

Learn more about Sacred Design Lab at [sacred.design](https://sacred.design)



# Belonging

|                     | Spiritually Struggling   | Spiritually Exploring  | Spiritually Journeying   | Spiritually Deepening  | Spiritually Flourishing  |
|---------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| Within yourself     | Make a list of times when you have felt most like yourself. Now notice patterns on the list: Were you alone or with other people? What were you doing? What were you like? | For five minutes, try out a practice that focuses on self-awareness, like meditation. You can download an app or just practice sitting still and noticing your breath going in and out. Could you make space for this every day? | Take a personality assessment such as the Enneagram and read your profile. What resonates? What does it help you to understand about yourself?   | Ask one or more people to join you on an intentional self-discovery process. Consider creating or attending a retreat or workshop that focuses on understanding the self.                    | Engage in a multi-day experience of silence and solitude. Try to do this at least once a year.   |
| With others         | What is something vulnerable you feel safe sharing with a trusted friend or family member, which it would help you to get off your chest?                                  | Intentionally tell the people who are most important in your life what they mean to you. You might say it aloud or write it in a card or an email.   | Take the risk of reaching out to someone you've been wanting to get to know better, especially if they're outside your usual circles. Ask them to share a meal (which could be virtual) and share stories. | Join a small group for regular authentic sharing and mutual support and accountability. Lean into your vulnerability and focus on generously listening to others as they share.              | Make a proactive effort to welcome a newcomer or stranger. This might be in your town or neighborhood, or within a community of which you're a part. |
| With something more | Try and remember one or two moments when you felt part of something bigger than yourself. Where were you? What was happening? Could you do something like it again?        | Spend an hour singing, dancing, or playing a sport with other people. Afterward, note down how you feel different than you did before. Do this a few more times and see if you notice a pattern.                                 | Find a way to serve your neighbors this week. That could be through a volunteer organization, or just by shoveling snow, babysitting, or something else that fits your situation.                          | Learn about the histories of people who've lived where you live, or the people you come from. How are you connected to them through the land, stories, and wisdom that has been passed down? | Creatively tell the story of your community through art or music, reminding others of what makes your neighborhood or ancestry worth celebrating.    |

# Becoming

|         | Spiritually Struggling  | Spiritually Exploring   | Spiritually Journeying   | Spiritually Deepening   | Spiritually Flourishing   |
|---------|---|---|--|---|---|
| Purpose | What is one thing you could watch, listen to, or read that feels connected to your sense of purpose? Pick something that you're drawn to, whether or not it would make sense to anyone else.                                | Who do you admire for the way they've lived their life? Learn more about them - by watching, listening to, or reading things, or even interviewing them if possible. Reflect on how their purpose is connected to your own. | Find an elder in your life - someone wise who you look up to, regardless of age. Ask that person to have a "purpose meeting" with you once a month for six months, where you reflect on your sense of purpose. By the end of this season, write down a personal purpose statement. | What are the personal practices and rituals that help you to align your everyday decisions and actions with your sense of purpose? Consult the traditions and teachers in your life to develop a deeper practice of reflecting on alignment with purpose. | Who are the two or three people that you can accompany as they find their purpose? Create a more intentional rhythm to check in with them, always making sure that you have your own people to accompany you too. |
| Healing | Take half an hour by yourself to reflect. First think of something painful that you have healed from. How did you do it? Now think of something you still want to heal from. What is one thing you could do to get started? | What is your healing support system? List the people, resources, and practices in your life that you can turn to for support with healing. What's missing that you want to add?   | Who in your life has healed from an experience like yours? Reach out to them for a conversation and reflect on how their wisdom might apply to you.  | What is the hard thing you've been waiting to do, which will take courage but will contribute to collective healing and liberation? Is now the time to get involved in a community effort? What is standing in your way?                                  | How can you put your own healing journey in service of others who are in pain? Prioritize lifting up others who have experienced suffering like your own.   |
| Seeking | Reserve a 30-minute window this week for exploring a big question you have about life - something you've always wondered about. Where can you go to learn more about this?  | Who is living their life in a way you admire? How did they get to be that way? Find out more about their journey and key decisions they made, and ask yourself how you might apply their wisdom.                            | What steps might you take to find at least one teacher or guide to support your spiritual life, as well as one or more communities of peers to journey alongside?  | How is your own spiritual journey leading you to serve others? What stands in the way of you giving your gifts? Make it a priority to work through any obstacles to sharing what you have to give.  | How are you teaching what you have learned about spiritual flourishing? Make sure you have regular opportunities to teach and share your learning, which will guarantee your own discovery process never ends.    |

# Beyond

|                                 | Spiritually Struggling  | Spiritually Exploring  | Spiritually Journeying   | Spiritually Deepening  | Spiritually Flourishing   |
|---------------------------------|---|--|--|--|---|
| Awe, wonder & transcendence     | Listen to a favorite piece of music and close your eyes. Allow yourself to get lost in the music. How would you describe this experience?                                     | Think about a time you felt awe or wonder. Where were you? Who were you with? What did it feel like? Could you do it again?  | Spend an hour in a park, forest, or other outdoor space. Consciously notice how your body responds to your environment. Reflect on your body's connection to the community of living things.                   | Develop a regular practice of reading and reflecting on a text that's meaningful to you, perhaps poetry or scripture. Try returning to the same piece several times in a row and watch how your understanding unfolds.                       | Devote time and energy to engaging your favorite spiritual practice every day. Hold celebrations with loved ones to mark each year that you have lived this way, and recommit to another year.  |
| Possibility, imagination & hope | Think of a friend who has made intentional changes in their life for the better. How do they talk about these changes? How might changes like that be possible in your life?  | How might you move through discouragement and cultivate hope? Call someone whom you admire for their courage and hopefulness. Ask them how they get unstuck when they encounter obstacles. | Who or what inspires you most? Devote an intentional hour to diving deeper into that source of inspiration, be it through video, images, writing, music, conversation, practices, or oral history.             | Invite a group of friends to share stories about possibility, imagination, and hope. Ask them to identify sources of inspiration for them and reflect on how they connect with that inspiration in their everyday lives.                     | Create a toolbox of stories, songs, texts, and wisdom that stimulates your sense of hope and imagination that flourishing is possible. Seek out others who are struggling and offer to help resource and accompany them on their journey. |
| Peoplehood & ancestry           | Who do you consider to be "your people"? Think of specific people, like grandparents, people from your neighborhood, or chosen family. Why and how are you connected to them? | Ask an auntie, abuela, cousin, or grandparent for a family recipe. Take a picture or video while you're making it and send it back to them. Even better, serve it to people you love!      | Think of someone from among your people who carries great stories and wisdom. Spend more time with them and begin to remember their stories - whether by writing them down, recording them, or retelling them. | Invite an elder from among your people to spend an hour telling you stories. Ask them how they feel connected to people who came before and who will come after. Invite them to share wisdom that has been passed from previous generations. | Intentionally bring together different generations to share a meal, create something together, or serve your greater community. Come prepared with a few great questions to get people sharing stories about their lives.                 |

# Spiritual Well Being

|                                 | Spiritually Struggling   | Spiritually Exploring   | Spiritually Journeying   | Spiritually Deepening  | Spiritually Flourishing   |
|---------------------------------|--|---|--|--|---|
| Spiritual well being as a whole | Spend a moment thinking about someone who is struggling - perhaps with health, money, or something else. Imagine yourself sending them loving energy and good wishes. Is there anything else you could do? | Think about a group in your life - do you have a men's group, women's group, book club, or gaming group? Think about a ritual you could create to celebrate your group's anniversaries. | Who are your creative collaborators? What do you do to support and nurture those relationships? Consider creating a covenant for your partnership or team to help navigate the highs and lows of working together. | How might you develop a more intentional rhythm of life, which allows for deepening connection to yourself, other people, the natural world, and something more? | Invite others to join with you in spiritual practices, conversations, and gatherings. Take leadership in cultivating community around spiritual well being for the others in your life. |