SUMMER THINK TANK

June 6 & 7, 2022 • A Virtual Members-Only Meeting

Individual and Organizational Assets that Boost Belongingness: What Place for the Workplace in Supporting Social Connectedness, Spirituality/Faith, and Purpose?

HERO

MEETING PROCEEDINGS

The 2022 HERO Summer Think was held as a Virtual convening for HERO members, on June 6th and 7th, with the task of asking ourselves, what place does spirituality and religion have in the workplace? To begin, Karen Moseley, HERO CEO & President, opened with remarks on her own personal story of religious and spiritual growth and the path forward she hoped HERO members would forge over the course of the two-day think tank meeting. In the spirit of openness, trust and genuine curiosity, HERO set out to open discussions about what some would consider a "taboo" topic in the workplace and the possibility of individuals bringing their *whole* selves to work.

At HERO, we pride ourselves in stretching boundaries for the health promotion profession, but we certainly don't do that without the thought leadership and input of our HERO members, our HERO Board and the many friends and faculty for HERO. So, I said up front personally all-in on my readiness for this think tank topic but let me also acknowledge that some who we asked about this topic considered it a low priority for employers if not something to steer clear of completely.

Given that some were reluctant about discussing faith and spirituality at work where others are deeply motivated by their religion, it should not go without saying that our usual ground rules for HERO Think Tanks were in full effect. We asked our Think Tank attendees to listen carefully and non-judgmentally, stay curious and create openings for each other to speak. And, like the Quaker tradition, to honor silence if that's what was needed. I've never experienced a HERO think tank where our members didn't afford one another full respect so I'm confident we all brought our most open-minded selves to these conversations.

In planning for this Think Tank, our own HERO team, representing diversity of beliefs and backgrounds, was a model of transparency and psychological safety, and made space

PERSONAL STORY FROM KAREN

It's been said that educators who hope to draw learners fully into an honest and open conversation need to model that behavior themselves so that others feel emboldened to follow. To that end, I want to share why it is that I'm passionate about the possibility that bringing our full selves to the workplace, including honoring faith traditions, could be a powerful direction for the workplace health and well-being movement.

- **Worship traditions in your formative years.**
  I grew up in a southern Baptist church that later pulled out of the Southern Baptist Convention because of diverging theological beliefs. If the church doors were open, our family was there. I attended Baptist youth camps every summer, some of my fondest memories as a teenager, and I was active in the Baptist Student Union as a college student.
- **Worship traditions today.** As a military family, we always sought out our church home when we moved to a new posting, and it was usually where our friendships and social connections began. Sometimes this meant worshipping in a nondenominational congregation in a military chapel. Now, I'm a member of Wake Forest Baptist Church, that sits on the campus of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. The seminary and my church do not share the same theology, even though both are Baptist. Yet, they

for uncomfortable questions while respecting boundaries and honoring the ties that bind us. This was not meant to be an evangelistic exercise. We/I fully acknowledge that there were nonbelievers and atheists present and we wanted to respect the place that each person holds in the meeting and the stories that you carry.

I urged attendees to bring their whole selves to this Think Tank. George Floyd's murder and other high visibility race crimes have sparked a surge of interest in diversity, equity, and inclusion programs at workplaces. Though many companies have endorsed new movements like Black Lives Matter, it seems we get horrific reminders nearly every day that discrimination related to race, religion and sexual orientation is far from over.

We used this HERO Think Tank to its fullest potential by challenging each other to consider what untested ways lie ahead for employers, organizational leaders, and grassroots organizers such as worksite wellness champions, could broaden dialogue, affect new policies, and more deeply integrate principles of inclusion and acceptance in workplace health and well-being initiatives. In particular, we planned to examine the role of belongingness and how companies are facilitating social connectedness.

KAREN CONT

are good neighbors to each other, sharing physical space. I credit our pastor for setting the tone for this relationship. As I've prepared for this think tank and reflected on my spiritual journey, I've recognized the conflict that occurs when two groups hold so tightly to their beliefs, even within the same denomination. And I've also seen the collegiality of those who are able to set aside differences and identify common ground.

- **It's impossible for me to separate my faith from any other aspect of who I am, including leader of HERO.** And my role at HERO is on a path that led directly from church, in fact my career choice of nonprofit management was a direct result of one particular sermon I heard in 1989. I'm not perfect by any means, but I try to lead through service, both my team and this organization. And because my purpose is so entwined with HERO's mission, I'm able to get through the tough days – or years – with a little more ease. I didn't pick the theme for this Think Tank, but you can be sure I was rooting for it from the first day it bubbled up. That's probably more than enough about me, but I hope that what I've shared of my story will help you ease into the next two days.

SPIRITUALITY, FAITH, AND CONNECTEDNESS
by Jessica Grossmeier, PhD, MPH

This session aimed to tangle with terminology and level-set the discussions for this Summer Think Tank on the role of religion, faith, and spirituality in the workplace. Participant polls indicated that even though there were a variety of views about what it meant to address spirituality in the workplace, many organizations have been incorporating spiritual elements into their organizations including:

• 80% focus on social connections and treating others well
• 73% offer programs or content on mindfulness or meditation
• 48% offer programs or content on individual purpose
• 45% offer designated quiet spaces for prayer or meditation
• 39% allow volunteerism programs to include faith-based organizations
• 27% provide access to onsite or virtual chaplains
• 9% have Employee Resource Groups devoted to specific faith or interfaith traditions

While there is no consensus among experts on the definition of workplace spirituality, there are three elements that are consistently mentioned in research articles and measurement tools:
• Having a sense of meaning and purpose
• Having a sense of connection and belonging
• Having a sense of connection to something greater than oneself

It is the integration of these three elements that comprise most definitions of workplace spirituality. When asked about what is most meaningful to people, what they value, and what they believe about their sense of community and worth, many will refer to a religious affiliation or a faith tradition. So, we need to create space for this and a container for ideas to be exchanged.
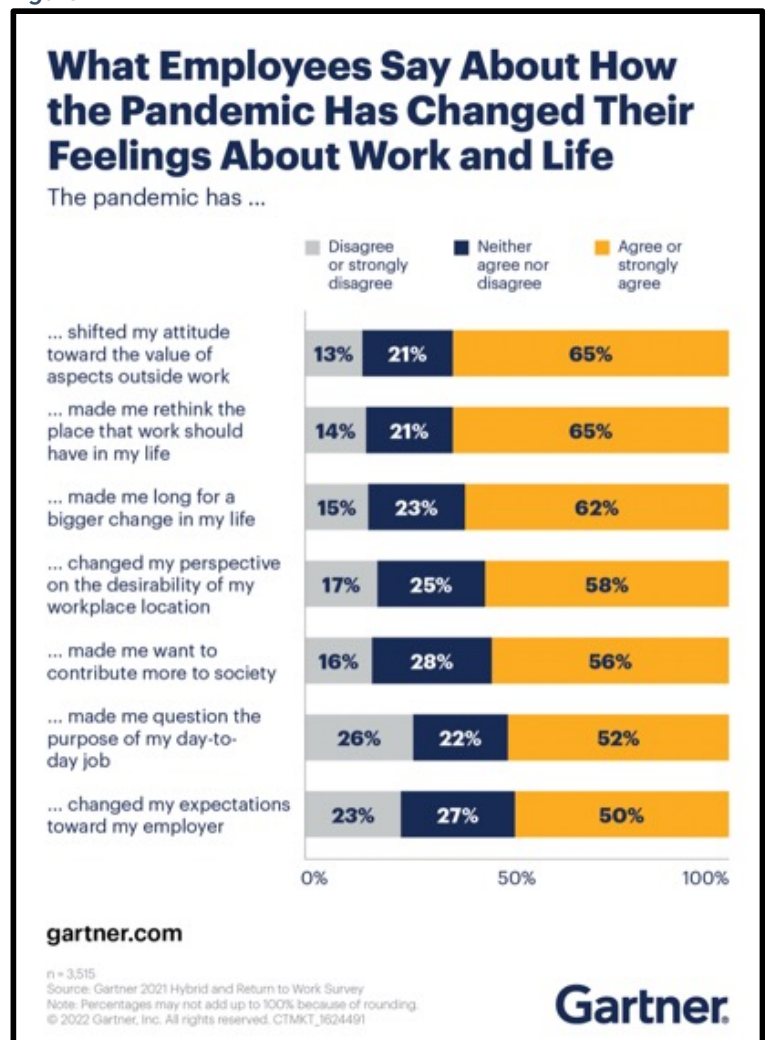
Consider this:
• 86% of US employees consider themselves to be spiritual to some extent.
• All humans are equipped with a capacity for spirituality

and our brains become more resilient and robust because of it.
• Workplace spirituality elements are linked to better physical and mental health outcomes, higher levels of employee engagement and performance, higher job satisfaction, and lower turnover rates.
• A majority of workplaces are saying on industry surveys that they don't think their existing well-being initiatives are meeting emerging employee needs and are looking for different approaches.
• More than half of employees who quit their job last year said they were looking for more meaning and purpose in their work (see figure 1).

Taken altogether, these data points make a case for why it's time to start talking about workplace spirituality.

Figure 1

What Employees Say About How the Pandemic Has Changed Their Feelings About Work and Life

The pandemic has ...

	Disagree or strongly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree or strongly agree
... shifted my attitude toward the value of aspects outside work	13%	21%	65%
... made me rethink the place that work should have in my life	14%	21%	65%
... made me long for a bigger change in my life	15%	23%	62%
... changed my perspective on the desirability of my workplace location	17%	25%	58%
... made me want to contribute more to society	16%	28%	56%
... made me question the purpose of my day-to-day job	26%	22%	52%
... changed my expectations toward my employer	23%	27%	50%

gartner.com

n = 3,515
Source: Gartner 2021 Hybrid and Return to Work Survey
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% because of rounding.
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INCLUSION AND INTERFAITH DIALOGUE
by Gary Gunderson, DDiv, DMin

Gary started with an analogy from his personal life as a beekeeper, likening the employee within an organization to a bee in a hive society, working together as one to complete tasks and thrive. In a beehive, no leader is more important than others in decision-making, and there is clarity about shared goals. He posed the question: *how can humans learn from this model to work as one to be their whole selves?* For humans, hope is more powerful than memory – even our most traumatic memories – but we are just starting to understand how spirit allows us to function at a larger scale.
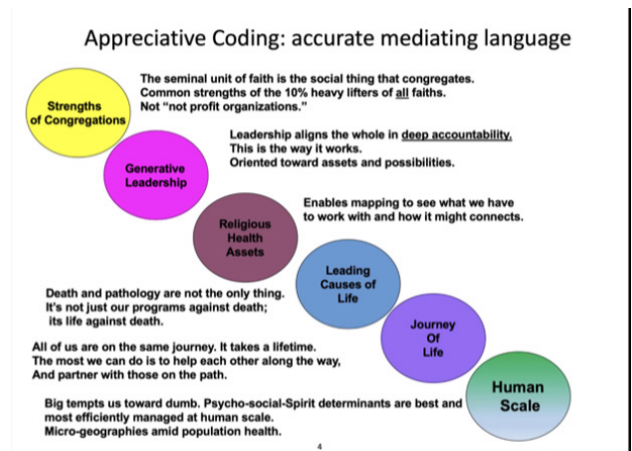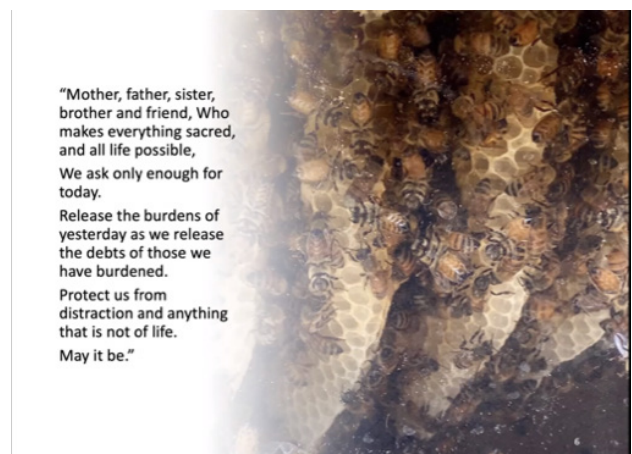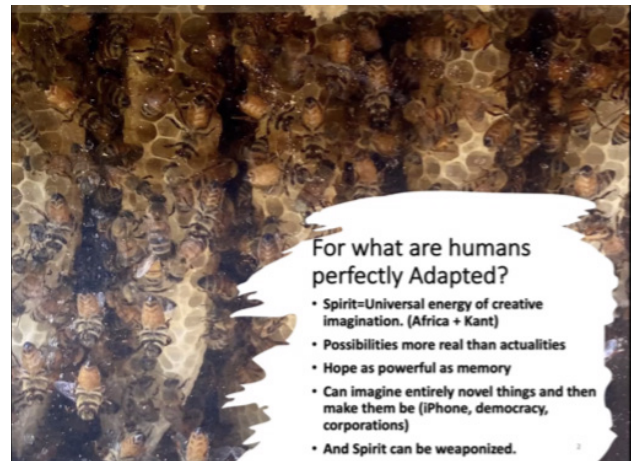
As a chaplain, Gary has worked to find commonality amongst all people and to use *spirituality* rather than *religion* to connect people more universally. He often uses common prayers known to many but in ways that are more inclusive. Using the same prayer in different voices can provide different meaning, such as ending a prayer with *"let it be so"* rather than *"amen."*

Gary polled Think Tank attendees with questions regarding their religious upbringing, and how that upbringing challenged their current religious or spiritual journey now as adults. The results were as follows:
- **56% attended religious service regularly** during up-bringing
- **35% now attend religious service regularly.** Gary commented that these results are higher than we see in the general population.

Gary also presented on Appreciative Coding: accurate mediating language. He posed two significant points:
1. Spirit is a component of Generative Leadership; and
2. Psycho-social-spirit determinants are best and most efficiently managed at human scale.

For what are humans perfectly Adapted?
- Spirit=Universal energy of creative imagination. (Africa + Kant)
- Possibilities more real than actualities
- Hope as powerful as memory
- Can imagine entirely novel things and then make them be (iPhone, democracy, corporations)
- And Spirit can be weaponized.

"Mother, father, sister, brother and friend, Who makes everything sacred, and all life possible,

We ask only enough for today.

Release the burdens of yesterday as we release the debts of those we have burdened.

Protect us from distraction and anything that is not of life.

May it be."

Appreciative Coding: accurate mediating language

Strengths of Congregations

The seminal unit of faith is the social thing that congregates. Common strengths of the 10% heavy lifters of _all_ faiths. Not "not profit organizations."

Generative Leadership

Leadership aligns the whole in deep accountability. This is the way it works. Oriented toward assets and possibilities.

Religious Health Assets

Enables mapping to see what we have to work with and how it might connects.

Leading Causes of Life

Death and pathology are not the only thing. It's not just our programs against death; its life against death.

Journey Of Life

All of us are on the same journey. It takes a lifetime. The most we can do is to help each other along the way, And partner with those on the path.

Human Scale

Big tempts us toward dumb. Psycho-social-Spirit determinants are best and most efficiently managed at human scale. Micro-geographies amid population health.

HOW BELIEF SYSTEMS AFFECT MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

with speaker Victor Stretcher, PhD, MPH, CEO of Kumanu; and Professor of Health Behavior & Health Education, Director for Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship at the University of Michigan.

Opening by introducing the audience to St. Lawrence, the patron saint of cooking and comedy, Vic used his storytelling talent to provide a view of spirituality from the perspective of purpose and drive, rather than religion. He asked: *What is religion doing for people that's positive, and how do we replicate that for those who are not religious?* He then guided us through an exercise to help us focus on purpose by identifying our "be goals" and "do goals" and "action goals" to get to "crispy habits."

Vic discussed these goals and habits as ways that individuals can discover their purpose in life, whether that be defined through spiritual connection and congregations or through their goals to "be" a leader, teacher, father, spouse or artist.

He further posed that as an organization, it is the employer's job to understand the "why" behind someone's "Be" goals, in order to better understand the person/employee. The "why" tells more about the person's actions and behaviors than any other assessment, as it provides insight to the employee's purpose in life and therefore, where their work is prioritized among their goals. Vic's diagram, as pictured above, shows that there are three types of goals that determine a person's purpose in life and levels of which those goals are important. "Action" goals are what work the person wants to put forth in the world, for themselves and others. "Do" goals are actionable still but for the person themselves as they look introspectively on their own behavior. These goals are what the person is working on for themselves daily. It is the inner most goals that are the "Be" goals, which identify who the person truly wants to be, what their purpose is, and why.
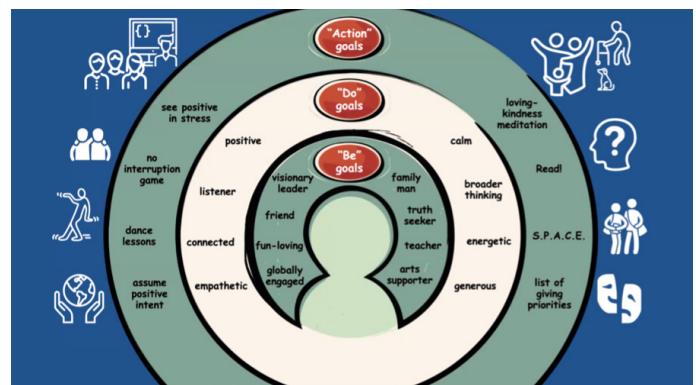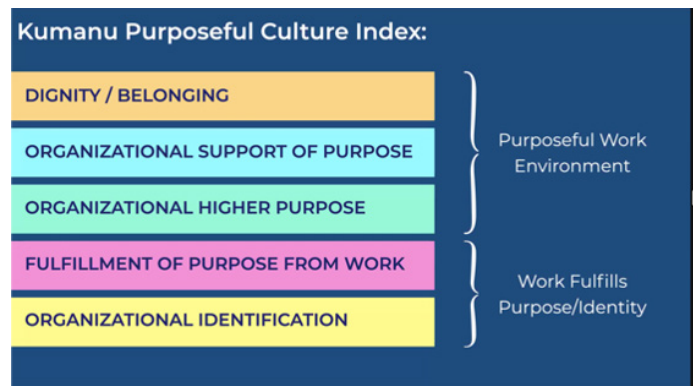
THE GROWING FAITH@WORK MOVEMENT
by Christina Clark, PhD, Senior Education Engagement Specialist, Religious Freedom & Business Foundation

As reflected in the REDI Index prepared by the Religious Freedom & Business Foundation, 202 companies out of the Fortune 500 enable their employees to bring their faith (or no faith) to work and this Faith at Work movement is growing. Why? Corporate America realizes it is good for their employees' well-being as it reduces stress, low morale, and disengagement. Allowing employees to feel seen and understood ultimately results in a better bottom line: better recruitment, higher retention, morale and loyalty, improved reputation, increased productivity, and innovation, strengthened intra-communication and customer service.

Faith within the world context is growing significantly. Even in the US, the number of people believing in a higher power surpasses 85%, which is even higher for foreign-born employees. For many, faith is their number one identifier and "their most deeply influential intrinsic motivator" (Paul Terry). Not allowing this important part of one's self to be acknowledged is as discriminatory and hurtful, as if one's gender, sexual orientation or race wasn't validated.

Faith-based ERGs (Employee Resource Groups) in a company not only promote better understanding and

communication between employees but also champion valuable philanthropic causes, making ultimately companies...and society better.
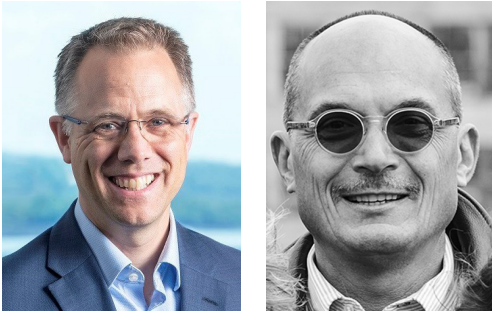
To summarize, here is PayPal's reason for including faith in their diversity, equity, and inclusion work: *"We believe all employees have the right to bring their whole self to work. Faith and worldviews are core to who we are — our values and beliefs — and to how we conduct business. The mission of Believe (ERG) is to foster an inclusive work culture and to promote holistic wellbeing by providing a forum to openly exercise and celebrate all faiths and worldviews while working. Believe exists to create awareness and understanding of faith, hope, love, empathy, respect for one another and service toward our customers, communities, and co-workers."* What would it be like if most companies embraced this kind of vision and culture?

LEADERSHIP AND INCLUSIVE EXPRESSION IN PUBLIC, PRIVATE AND FAITH SECTORS. WHAT ROLE FOR THE WORKPLACE?

with speakers, Joel Spoonheim, MURP, Senior Director for Worksite Health & Population Well-being for HealthPartners; and Ron Stout, MD, MPH, President & CEO of Ardmore Institute of Health.

Joel and Ron presented the attendees with the thought-provoking question of "What is a person's 'why?'" opening up the discussion for HERO members to pose how employers can foster an individual's purpose in life (spiritual based and other) to help not just those individuals, but also the organization's culture as a whole.

Spiritual Fitness: Unpacking your "Why"

Spiritual Fitness is the beliefs and practices that strengthen one connectedness with sources of hope, meaning, and purpose. Spiritual fitness is critical to developing overall wellness. Spiritual fitness:

- Enables **Hope**
- Engages **Purpose**
- Increases **Energy**
- Reinforces **Resilience**

Ardmore Institute of Health

Submission by Ron Stout, MD, MPH

"Your cholesterol, your blood pressure, your blood sugar is too high. You're too fat, you're not walking/ running enough, you're not sleeping correctly, stop worrying about everything…Know your numbers…" How often have we tried to inform (scare) our employees into sustained health behavior change? Has it ever worked? Really?

Have we taken the time to explore an individual's why? Have we listened to understand and empower their purpose; have we enabled hope? Have we given employees the space, or perhaps even the nudge, to explore their spiritual side? Might we recognize that for many, spirituality can clarify purpose, enable hope, and optimize energy? My experience indicates that purpose, hope, and energy are foundational to optimizing well-being and enabling employees to carry out their individual and corporate purpose. Think about it.
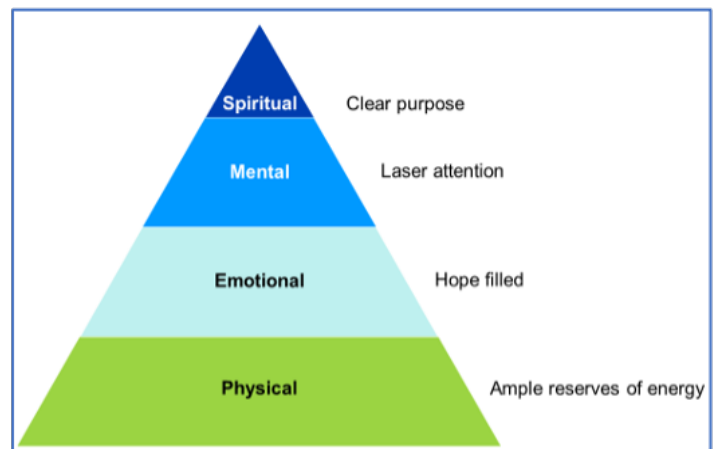

Spiritual	Clear purpose
Mental	Laser attention
Emotional	Hope filled
Physical	Ample reserves of energy

FAITH FRIENDLY ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICES

by Bethany Slater, MSt, Jewish Educator & Doctoral Candidate of Comparative Theology at Boston College

What virtues help make us great employers for religious minorities? How can we help these employees feel affirmed and respected?

Be Humble and Respectfully Curious:

- Allow your employee to define their religious identity. Ask open questions about how you can best support your colleague.
- Don't respond to the need for accommodations around holidays with resentment. Instead, notice how privileged most of your employees are that their religious observance is already supported by the American system which gives time off for Christian holidays. For example, there are important Jewish holidays in the fall that may require employees to take 7 days off over the course of 4 weeks. See if you can allow them to trade those days off work for other days, rather than requiring them to use vacation time.
- Don't assume you know how to make your employee feel included, instead ask. For example, many companies add a Hanukkah menorah to Christmas displays. Hanukkah takes place for one week, sometime between Thanksgiving and Christmas. It makes little sense to put out a menorah for a month and a half like one might do with a Christmas tree.

Be Flexible:

- Look at the schedule of major holidays in the religious traditions of your employees. Plan major company programs, retreats, and special events around those dates so that you are not creating a conflict for your employee between loyalty to you and loyalty to their faith tradition.
- Allow employees to work different hours each week if possible so that they can observe their weekly holidays. For example, Judaism's Sabbath begins at sundown. During the winter, Sabbath may begin in the mid-afternoon making a full day of work on Friday difficult.
- Ask employees what food you can order that will allow them to feel included in any team meals. This shows care and respect for their observance of dietary restrictions and demonstrates concern that they feel included.

These examples can seem like small things, but as a minority, it is deeply affirming when an employer demonstrates traits like flexibility, curiosity, and humility.

HOW COULD FAITH TRADITIONS FIT IN ORGANIZATIONAL DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION POLICIES AND PRACTICES?

with speakers, Tsitsi Masvawure, PhD, professor of Practice in Health Studies, Coordinator for the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies at the College of the Holy Cross; and Jack Bastable, Co-President of Vital Leadership.
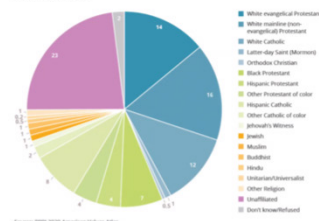
- According to HR Research Institute more than three quarters of organizations have immature DEI initiatives and only 19% track religion as part of DEI.
- Michelle Gethers-Clark, Chief Diversity Officer and Head of Corporate Social Responsibility at Visa, states "inclusion is the idea that all identities matter and are embraced."

- If faith/spirituality is part of how people identify, shouldn't encouraging the recognition of their faith/spirituality be part of inclusion?
- Prominent business leaders include faith and spirituality in their identification

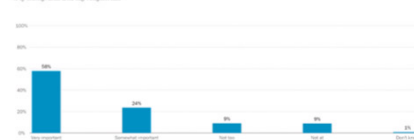**Religion/Spirituality Belongingness in the Workplace: WHY?**

- **Individuals bring their religion and spirituality (or lack thereof) with them to work!**
  - Three-quarters of people in USA identify with a religion

- **This is a great opportunity to acknowledge employees as "whole persons"**
  - Part of employees' search for relevance and meaning
  - Key component of employee psycho-social wellbeing

- **Some studies suggest improved productivity in organizations that recognize employee religion/spirituality**

FIGURE 1. The American Religious Landscape in 2020
Percent who identify as:

Importance of religion in one's life among immigrants

https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/religious-landscape-study/immigrant-status/immigrants/