



Spirituality and Public Life Initiative

# Conspirituality in the Time of Plague: Dispatches from the Front



## Sam Kestenbaum

Journalist covering  
religion in America

Sam Kestenbaum is a journalist who covers religious life in America for *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and elsewhere. In 2023, he was the recipient of the Wilbur Award for magazine-writing and has won prizes from the Los Angeles Press Club, the Silurians Press Club and the Society for Features Journalism. The American Academy of Religion calls his writing “remarkably fluent and engaging; each article... makes a little-known dimension of modern religion vividly accessible.” In the words of *The Revealer* magazine, “He has a particular talent for telling stories about complicated people with a kind of lucid nuance.”

This event is part of the Initiative in Spirituality and Public Life, made possible by a generous donation to the Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict. The initiative highlights the importance of spirituality to the ethical formation of persons and citizens, and to the institutions of public life that are vital to human flourishing.

**November 2, 2023**

**4:30 p.m. MST**

**West Hall, 135**

**ASU Tempe campus**

1000 Cady Mall, Tempe, AZ 85281

**Scores of churches closed during COVID-19, but contrary to predictions that religion would diminish, the pandemic led to a peculiar efflorescence of religious life.** A faith-healing TikToker gained a fandom by performing miracles on screen; a religion-and-politics roadshow toured the country, bringing doomsday prophets, January 6 rioters and anti-vaxxers together in harmony; and at New Age fairs and conventions, the yoga and wellness crowd absorbed QAnon gospel while shopping for sage and crystals. Drawing from reporting for outlets like *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, this talk offers a picture of a multi-faceted spiritual convergence born in the time of plague.

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