

Growing in Grace: Formation Perspectives

Wem WAIOLAIHUI'IA CENTER for MINISTRY *For all God's people*

Wisdom, Wonder, and Following the Way of Jesus

By The Rev. Cn. Andrew Arakawa

One of my hopes for our diocese is that we can continue to nurture a culture that embraces lifelong learning. The Greek word for “disciple” is *mathetes*, which means “learner.” At its core, discipleship is not a one-time decision, but a lifelong journey of growth, reflection, and formation.

To walk this path of ongoing learning is to step into a mindset that practical theologian Kristina Lizardy-Hajbi calls the *habitus of curiosity*.¹ This mindset is a way of being that values questions over answers and wonder over certainty. **It asks us to lead not from the need to be right, but from the desire to be faithful.** This kind of curiosity makes room for new insights, for diverse voices, and for an awareness of the surprising ways the Holy Spirit moves in our lives.

The above is not always easy. There’s a sense of safety in certainty. It can feel vulnerable to say “I don’t know” or “I’ve never thought of it that way.” **In our life of faith, vulnerability is stepping out in courage.** It is the kind of courage we need to embrace the ineffable and follow the Way.

Cultivating this curiosity as a spiritual practice invites us into deeper relationship with God, with one another, and with the world. It enables us to grow, change, and be changed. Whether we are lay or ordained, young or seasoned in our faith, we are all students in the school of grace.

What might it look like to lean into a habitus of curiosity? Could it be asking a new question in Bible study, welcoming a perspective you hadn’t considered, or trying a spiritual practice you’ve never done before? Or seeking out a class or program that excites or inspires you? Or taking a daily moment to be in a mindset of awe and wonder? Even a small step can be an opening to the Spirit’s invitation.

Can we open ourselves up to reflect meaningfully on the multifaceted cultural dynamics of our diocese? If you are not Kanaka ‘Ōiwi, like myself, what does it mean to be a settler in Hawai‘i? What is our kuleana with that identity? How do we communicate with one another in a way that brings about healing, reconciliation, and a profound sense of relationality? While serving as the Convener of our Racial Reconciliation Task Force, and with the curriculum

¹ Kristina Lizardy-Hajbi, *Unraveling Religious Leadership: Power, Authority, and Decoloniality* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2024).

development expertise of Dr. Joseph Eppink, our team developed the Ho‘imi Pono program for congregations. The curriculum combines the global perspective of the Church of England’s *Difference* course with the local wisdom of our diocese’s own Hō‘imi Pono framework to foster deeper understanding and meaningful reconciliation. This 10-week experience equips participants with the tools and training needed to lead transformative change that honors our shared humanity and celebrates our multilayered culture here in Hawai‘i. If you are interested in engaging with the Hō‘imi Pono curriculum in your community, please contact the current Convener, Mary Carpenter, for more information at lualima25@gmail.com.

Let us be bold enough to learn. Let us be faithful enough to wonder. And let us continue to grow as a community of lifelong learners, disciples who walk humbly, seek wisdom, and follow Christ with open hearts.

*“Get wisdom; get insight: do not forget nor turn away
from the words of my mouth.
Do not forsake her, and she will keep you;
love her, and she will guard you.
The beginning of wisdom is this: get wisdom,
and whatever else you get, get insight.
Prize her highly, and she will exalt you;
she will honor you if you embrace her.
She will place on your head a fair garland;
she will bestow on you a beautiful crown.”* (Prov 4:5-9 NRSVUE)

Growing in Grace – Formation Perspectives seeks to cultivate a community of lifelong learners as disciples of Christ within our diocese. The articles offer resources, share formation stories, and give updates on the Waiolaihui‘ia Center for Ministry. Please reach out to the Rev. Canon Andrew Arakawa if you have story ideas or resources that can add to this ongoing conversation: arakawa@episcopalhawaii.org.