

Growing in Grace: Formation Perspectives

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

The ABCs of Faith Formation: Autonomy, Belonging, Competence

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In educational settings, we often think about the “ABCs” of learning: Autonomy, Belonging, and Competence, which are drawn from Self-Determination Theory. The concept helps us develop a framework that supports educational environments that meet the three psychological needs mentioned above.

- **Autonomy** refers to the student's need to feel in control of their own learning and to have a sense of agency in making choices.
- **Belonging** is about feeling connected, accepted, and valued within the learning community.
- **Competence** involves feeling capable of and having the resources to successfully meet learning challenges.

As I think about our lives together as a community of faith and as lifelong learners continually digging deeper as disciples of Christ, I want us to consider the “ABC’s” of learning within a theological framework.

From a theological lens –

- **Autonomy** is honoring God’s invitational love, rather than coercing human response. There is a respect for the dignity and moral responsibility of individuals as partners in God’s unfolding story.
- Creating a deep sense of **belonging** patterned after the dance of divine communion, where all individuals matter and feel seen. The Church is described as a body, a family, and a household of faith, emphasizing that each person is valued, interwoven, and needed.
- Nourishing **competence** and providing the resources so each learner can live out their unique, God-given calling with confidence and skill.

How might this framework shape the way we plan our adult education offerings? Formation classes? Our Bible Studies? Or our Sunday Schools?

I also think the framework can be helpful as we consider our lives together as congregations and as a whole diocese. What do we need to create environments of flourishing? How are we supporting each other? What do we need to feel safe in taking the risk of being a learner?

Happy learning, friends.

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.