

Growing in Grace: Formation Perspectives

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

Where Grace Meets Courage: Seven Decisive Moments

By The Rev. Cn. Andrew J. Arakawa, Canon for Ministry Formation

I just finished reading Bishop Mariann Budde's book *How We Learn to Be Brave*. I could not put the book down. I appreciated Bp. Budde's stories and her willingness to be vulnerable on the page by sharing her own personal struggles in her vocation, and how she faced them with grace and courage.

Bp. Budde organizes the book around "decisive moments" in life and faith: deciding to go, to stay, to start, to accept what we do not choose, to step up to the plate, living through letdowns, and the hidden virtue of perseverance. We grow in grace not by feeling less afraid, but by learning how to make brave decisions in the light of God's love. Bp. Budde suggests that courage is formed at the seven recurring decision points in our lives, and all of them are places where grace can meet us.

Sometimes grace invites us to go, to step into a new ministry, leave a familiar role, or cross a boundary for the sake of the gospel. At other times, grace invites us to stay, to remain with a community through conflict, to keep showing up in a relationship that is costly and imperfect. We are also called to start: small, hopeful beginnings, from a new outreach project to a renewed prayer practice, often without certainty about how it will turn out.

Grace also works when we must accept what we did not choose: illness, loss, disappointment, or change we cannot control. There are moments when we must step up to the plate in public, speaking or acting for justice and mercy even when it feels risky or misunderstood. After big decisions, we inevitably experience letdowns, the fatigue, criticism, or quiet failure that follows our boldness. Budde reminds us that these letdowns are not signs that grace has left us but opportunities to learn, repent, and begin again.

Finally, grace trains us in perseverance, the hidden virtue that keeps us walking the way of love over time. In the rhythm of life, in prayer and in the ordinary commitments of service, God patiently shapes our hearts to be brave. As you look at your own life and ministry, which of these seven decisions is before you now, and how might God's grace be inviting you to take the next courageous step?

Here are some questions for us to explore.

- Which of Budde’s seven decision points- going, staying, starting, accepting, stepping up, living through letdowns, or persevering feels most present in your life or ministry right now, and why?
- When you look back on a time you were afraid but acted anyway, where do you now see signs of God’s grace at work in that moment and in what followed?
- What concrete, next step, however small, might embody brave faith for you in this season, and how can you invite your community to support and discern that step with you?

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.