

# Growing in Grace: Formation Perspectives

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

## **Becoming and Belonging: Forming a Constellation of Leaders**

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

I am grateful to have attended the 2026 Forma Conference, held January 26–29 at St. John's Cathedral in Denver. Formation leaders from across our wider Church, and from a variety of denominations, gathered around the conference theme, "*Becoming and Belonging.*" Grounded in 2 Corinthians 3:18, we were invited to reflect on two central questions: *Who do I belong to? And who am I becoming?*

Although snowstorms on the East Coast prevented him from joining us in person, we were grateful for the technology that allowed our keynote speaker, the Rev. Dr. Patrick B. Reyes, to participate via Zoom. Since reading his book, *The Purpose Gap: Empowering Communities of Color to Find Meaning and Thrive*, I have been especially drawn to his model of cultivating a constellation of leaders rather than relying on solitary "superstar" leaders.

During the keynote conversation, one participant asked whether Dr. Reyes's understanding of constellation leadership had shifted since the book's publication in 2021. He responded candidly that this kind of leadership work is, in fact, much harder than traditional hierarchical models. Even in collaborative systems, there is often an unspoken expectation that a leader must excel at everything needed to move an organization forward. As a result, in constellation models, workflow can feel slower, and the work itself requires a group of people who are willing and able to keep their egos in check.

Dr. Reyes also named how countercultural this approach can be. Constellation leadership is not about simply following existing rules or structures. Instead, it honors the wisdom embedded within the community, values every voice, and intentionally decenters authority. In doing so, it invites us to live more fully into our identity as imago Dei, recognizing the dignity of every human being, and encourages systems to become their best selves. This work is not about achieving consensus, but about carrying the conversation forward. Dr. Reyes urged us to find joy in engaging these complex systems together, all in service of bringing more of God's love into the world.

As we think about forming leaders for our diocese, here are some things for us to consider:

- How might we intentionally cultivate leadership that is shared, relational, and rooted in the wisdom of the community rather than concentrated in a few individuals?

- What practices help us decenter ego and authority so that every voice can be honored and heard?
- Where might God be inviting us to embrace the slower, more complex work of collaboration as a faithful expression of who we are becoming together?

Throughout the week, the conference schedule made generous space for workshops, affinity groups, and informal conversations. These moments allowed participants to share resources, deepen relationships, and learn from one another across dioceses and denominations. Sponsored by Forma in partnership with the Department of Lifelong Learning at Virginia Theological Seminary, the conference reinforced the importance of ongoing collaboration and relationality in the work of formation.

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*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](mailto:arakawa@episcopalhawaii.org).