



Twelve Years of Grace: The Continuing Journey of the Waiolaihui'ia Center for Ministry

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

This year marks the 12-year anniversary of the Waiolaihui'ia Center for Ministry (WCM). The number 12 is an auspicious number in our Judeo-Christian tradition. We can recall the Tribes of Israel, the apostles, and the 12 gates and 12 foundations described in John's Revelation. 12 is a powerful symbol of divine authority, completeness, unity, and spiritual and communal perfection.

Alongside God's perfection, the number 12 also symbolizes a "work in progress." This is especially apparent when seen in the context of an ongoing mission, developing leadership, or spiritual journey. The foundation stories of the 12 tribes and 12 apostles are narratives of unfolding covenant and mission, not static completion. The tribes went through long periods of wandering, settlement, and spiritual growth, while the apostles sometimes struggled, learned, and only gradually embodied their calling.

Likewise, WCM has been an ongoing and faithful work in progress. From our first cohort of four Kanaka 'Ōiwi seekers, WCM has graduated several cohorts, leading individuals to ordination and ministries in our diocese. In 2023, we expanded our offerings by developing a lay formation program for licensing lay preachers, catechists, and worship leaders. Last year, the decision was made for individuals seeking ordination to either enter a diaconal formation program for deacons or attend a low-residential or full residential seminary to receive a Master of Divinity degree.

With these developments, WCM has remained committed to providing contextually based theological education to form leaders, both ordained and lay, for our diocese and the wider church. This kind of formation is essential for our diocese and reflects our unique history, traditions, the identity of Kanaka 'Ōiwi, as well as other cultures present in Hawai'i. Our aim is to continually support and hold individuals in their formation processes, whether lay or ordained, within a relational and contextually relevant cohort that fosters their growth as leaders.

Here are some highlights from our 12th year of growth and progress, and what's ahead –

- WCM received a five-year, \$125,000 grant from the Iona Collaborative. The grant will help us continue to develop our resources for our culturally contextual cohort and curriculum.

- Ongoing development of a digital project management system to centralize individuals' files. This process will help streamline communication and support individuals across various stages of their formation.
- WCM launched *Growing in Grace: Formation Perspectives* for the E-Chronicle to enliven a culture of lifelong learning in our diocese.
- In July, we completed an Insight Space cohort.
- In September, WCM graduate Catherine McPherson-Tamos was ordained to the Transitional Diaconate at the Episcopal Church of the Holy Apostles in Hilo.
- In November, WCM will undergo a 360-degree review facilitated by the Iona Collaborative.
- Also in November, WCM will host a Kanaka 'Ōiwi Clergy Listening Retreat at Camp Mokolē'ia. The hope of the retreat is to gather the lived wisdom of our Kanaka 'Ōiwi clergy so we might better understand how we can form leaders who are culturally humble and competent.

WCM is by no means perfect, but we continually aim for excellence in what we are doing to support leadership development in our diocese. Please keep the Waiolaihui'ia Center for Ministry in your prayers as we continue our journey for another 12 years. If you would like to learn more about WCM or get involved in its programs, please get in touch with me, arakawa@episcopalhawaii.org.

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.