



Tending to the Soul of Our Diocese: Formation for a Faithful Future in a Liminal Season

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

I recently picked up my copy of Susan Beaumont's book, *How to Lead When You Don't Know Where You Are Going*, to look at what she has to say about this liminal, in-between time we are in as a diocese. When we think about the future of the Church, it is easy to move quickly toward plans. What program should we begin? How can we strengthen stewardship, participation, leadership, or communication? These are worthwhile questions. Yet Beaumont invites an even deeper question: What does it mean to tend to the soul of an institution?

Our diocese is more than our congregations, buildings, budgets, committees, and calendars. We are the Body of Christ: a people with a history, a calling, joys and wounds, relationships, hopes, and a shared life in God. Soul tending is the patient, prayerful work of helping our communities remain connected to our deepest identity and vocation. This is formation work.

Christian formation is not limited to a class, a retreat, or a particular age group. Formation is also what happens when we learn how to pray before making decisions; how to listen without rushing to reply; how to tell the truth about our history; how to carry grief and disagreement without abandoning one another; and how to recognize new life when God is doing something unexpected among us.

Beaumont identifies several dimensions of this work: deepening communal discernment, shaping institutional memory, clarifying purpose, and noticing what is emerging. Formation for soul tending can include equipping people to notice emerging life. We might invite congregations to ask: Where are people finding connection? Which ministries are generating joy, generosity, or deeper relationships? What gifts are young people, kūpuna, lay leaders, and new members already bringing? Rather than assuming that renewal must arrive as a large program, we can bless small faithful experiments and learn from them together.

Soul tending will not give us a quick formula for the future. It asks something more demanding and more hopeful: that we become a people capable of faithful attention to each other, the created world, and the ineffable presence of God.

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: aarakawa@episcopalhawaii.org.