

Growing in Grace: Formation Perspectives

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

Formed for the Middle Way: Growing in Grace Through the Via Media

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Over the long Martin Luther King, Jr. weekend, I thought a lot about the *via media*. Although not an Anglican, Dr. King's life and theology embodied a disciplined "middle way" between passive acceptance of injustice and violent retaliation, grounded in active, cruciform love. His nonviolent practice held together prophetic urgency and patient hope in a way that resonates strongly with our Anglican instincts about balance, tension, and formation over a lifetime. The *via media* is our way of being Christians that is not a lukewarm faith or an avoidance of hard truths. Rather, the *via media* names a disciplined, demanding path that seeks faithfulness by holding together what can feel like opposing truths. It is the place of holy tension, where Scripture, tradition, and reason remain in living conversation, and where Christian formation unfolds over a lifetime.

In an increasingly polarized world, where issues are complex, nuance is often lost, and fear can silence voices for justice, the *via media* offers a vital way of being Christian in public. Formation in this tradition shapes us not to retreat into tribal certainty or anxious neutrality, but to engage courageously, prayerfully, and relationally. The middle way is not passive; it is active, courageous faithfulness that refuses simplifications and insists that God's truth is larger than our categories.

Historically, Anglicanism has held together paradox: catholic and reformed, contemplative and active, rooted and responsive. In Hawai'i, where cultures, histories, and perspectives meet every day, this path of holding multiple truths, in dialogue, with generosity and a deep sense of aloha, should feel familiar to us and is relevant to how we engage the world. The *via media* forms Christians who can stand for justice without demonizing others, speak truth without abandoning compassion, and resist fear with hope grounded in God's love.

Learning to walk this path will help us be faithful emissaries of God's love into a world that desperately needs it, not by choosing or cowering to the loudest side but by remaining rooted in Christ while engaging the world's pain, complexity, and longing for healing.

Questions for prayer and reflection:

- Where do fear or polarization tempt me toward silence or rigidity?
- What complex issue is God inviting me to engage with deeper listening and courage?
- How might holding tension faithfully be an act of Christian witness?

Practicing the via media:

- Seek out faithful voices across difference and listen with humility.
- Practice “both/and” thinking when faced with complex moral questions.
- Pray for courage to speak and act for justice, trusting the Spirit to guide 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.