

EFM: Education for Ministry

EFM (Education For Ministry) is a four-year program of theological education by extension (distance learning) from the School of Theology's Programs Center at The University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee.

During the academic year, the Seminar Group meets weekly for two to four hours per week, in addition to individual study. The group often shares an informal, dish-to-pass meal; each meeting begins and ends with worship and prayer. The Tioga County group has met at convocation parishes, in members' homes, at local parks, and at an area restaurant.

EFM began in Wellsboro in 2001, when our Diocese asked Canon Greg and Susan Hinton to participate in EFM Mentor training, and to start a convocation-wide seminar group in the Northern Tier. The group began in the fall of 2002 with participants from each of the following parishes: St. Paul's/Wellsboro, St. James/Mansfield, St. Andrew's/Tioga, and Trinity/Antrim. Shortly after the group began, another group formed in the far western part of the Northern Tier convocation, based in Coudersport. (This group is now inactive.)

EFM is designed to function much like a one-room schoolhouse, with seminar members from as many as all four years of the program meeting together in a single group. In succeeding years, EFM can continue to serve as a place for education and theological reflection, with multi-parish membership and with participants at all program levels.

Three members of the Tioga County seminar group completed all four years of the program, and several participants found EFM helpful in discerning a call to ordained ministry.

The Tioga County seminar group also met on a number of occasions to share ideas about adult formation and education for baptized ministries, as well as other ministries that can be shared among the participating parishes, such as Lay Eucharistic Visitors' ministries.

It is hoped that re-activating a diverse, multi-parish seminar group will continue to provide opportunities to foster cooperative inter-parish working relationships, and to provide the training ground for carrying them out, as well. To that end, the Tioga County seminar group sponsored and assisted with leadership of several Saturday workshops open to people beyond the EFM program. These included church history, Lay Eucharistic Visitors' training, and Worship Leaders' training and certification.

Another project of EFM in Tioga County was stewardship of an extensive lending library (over 100 items), covering subject such as Christian Education, Worship, Fund-Raising, and Evangelism for small-membership churches in rural and small-town communities. [These materials](#) were given into the care of Susan Hinton by generous church consultants in 2004 and 2005, when the local parishes and the Diocese sponsored her journey through a number of conferences, parish visits, and consultations with the goal of equipping our area parishes to flourish in mission and members.

EFM: What, and Why?

Lay persons face the task of interpreting the faith in a complex world. They need education which supports their faith and which trains them to express that faith in day-to-day events. EFM is preparation for that ministry to which we are all called-- the vocation for which we pray at the end of the Eucharist: "And now, Father, send us out to do the work you have given us to do, to love and serve you as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord."

The Program's History and Scope

The Education for Ministry program began with a vision of enrolling a few hundred students, to provide an educational parallel for spouses of seminarians enrolled at Sewanee. Within a few years, EFM developed into a program reaching several thousand students, with groups around the globe. More than eighty dioceses of the Episcopal Church as well as other denominations have contractual arrangements with EFM.

The Seminar Group

Enrollment in EFM results in the formation of an "EFM Seminar Group." During the academic year, participants read theological texts, and meet together on a regular basis to discuss a topic of group interest, and its application in our world. This guided discussion process is called "theological reflection." A seminar group may include participants from any or all of the four "years" of the EFM curriculum. There are no exams.

Mentors

EFM seminar groups work under the leadership of mentors, who contract to serve as guides and administrators. Mentors may be lay or ordained persons. EFM mentors are not teachers in the traditional sense who are expected to impart information; the teacher's role is built into the program materials. An EFM mentor must work as an equipper rather than as an informer of people. As administrator of an EFM group, the mentor is also the person through whom the group communicates with the Extension Center at Sewanee, and the person who is responsible for communicating program policies to the group.

Enrollment

The Education for Ministry program is a four-year curriculum. Each "year" is a nine-month cycle of study. Students enroll for one cycle at a time. Full participation by all enrollees is essential and regular attendance is expected. From time to time EFM processes may be used outside the EFM group itself, such as for adult education or to introduce EFM to interested parties.

Tuition

At the time of enrollment, students pay the full year's tuition. Fees cover the cost of the EFM materials and the honorarium for the mentor. In addition, students need a Bible, and may wish to obtain additional reading materials suggested in the bibliographies. Parishes and dioceses have created a number of approaches to assisting students with tuition

