

EfM

E D U C A T I O N F O R M I N I S T R Y

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From the EfM Program Director

The following excerpts are from a promotional brochure designed by the EfM group at St. Bartholomew's Church, NY, NY. The brochure describes EfM for newcomers and provides enrollment information for those who want to join.

"Education for Ministry, affectionately known as EfM, is a four-year ecumenical program designed to prepare you for lay ministry within the diverse contexts of contemporary life... The curriculum is centered on theological reflection, which is the artful spiritual discipline of putting our life experiences into conversation with the living God of our faith. It is a practical skill that will provide a way for you to experience greater meaning in your day-to-day life... Seminar groups work under the leadership of mentors. Mentors are not 'teachers' in the traditional sense (who are expected to impart information about the Christian tradition); the role of the 'teacher' is built into the program materials. The mentor in EfM provides structure for the group and enables them to study, engage and pray together. Most importantly, the mentor encourages the hearts of participants."

Thank you, EfM members at St. Bart's, for this very helpful language regarding the program! Does your EfM group have a brochure? You can contact the Programs Center at 800.722.1974 to get copies of ours, or create your own.

Have you ever considered doing a TR on your EfM experience? Whether you are currently active in the program, or have been away for some time, you might be surprised by what you discover. Try using the following method.

1. Name what you have experienced as God's forming activity in your personal life through EfM, and what you have noticed happening within the program as a whole.
2. Create a narrative metaphor for the way your group sees EfM and use the metaphor to connect to ideas, images and stories from Tradition and Culture sources. Have a conversation about what you understand and see happening, especially with reference to human nature, the whole of creation, and how God is understood. What do you believe about EfM?
3. Identify two or three new things seen or understood from the conversation.
4. Discuss the implications for yourself, the EfM program, the Church and the world in which we live.
5. In silence, listen to what the Spirit is saying to the Church, then compose a collect based on your reflection.

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A CALL TO ACTION

An important part of my job is to read and respond to EfM graduate surveys. This year's graduates affirm a truth that I have come to appreciate in my years as an EfM staff member. One reason EfM is valuable and life giving to people is that it provides a safe environment for communities of practice to form. Communities of practice are groups or networks of individuals who share a concern, a set of problems, or a deep passion about a topic and who deepen their knowledge and understanding in this area by interacting with each other on an ongoing basis. One of this year's graduates explains that EfM enables groups to deepen their theological and spiritual knowledge by providing "a safe group to pose tough questions, analyze, and share our individual positions on theological and spiritual questions."

Four years in an EfM community of practice helps people understand that ministry encompasses all aspects of our lives—our jobs, our family relationships, and encounters we have with others along our journey. A graduate relates the understanding of ministry gained as a result of the EfM experience. "I am now able to recognize the many small opportunities presented me to minister, and realize that situations in the past I took for granted as helping someone were actually a ministry." Many people have a better understanding of what ministry is after the four years, but some are still not sure what that ministry should be or what God is calling them to do.

Many EfM graduates say that a major outcome of their four-year experience is a deep desire to make the knowledge and community experience the program provides available to others. They ask how to do this. My observation is that as people graduate from EfM, their communities of practice finish, but a new opportunity emerges to build communities of action that can support each other to bring EfM to a wider audience.

There are many ways EfM alumni can develop communities of action to further the mission of EfM. EfM's mission is to provide people with an opportunity to discover how to respond to the call to Christian service and carry out that call in the parish, Church, and world. You can make this mission your ministry by becoming an EfM mentor to facilitate others' learning. You can seek opportunities to tell your EfM story about how the program has impacted your life at parish gatherings, diocesan conventions, or ministry fairs. You can write articles for diocesan or local publications that explain the scope and benefits of the

program. You can offer your experience, talents, and time to work alongside your EfM diocesan coordinator to publicize, promote, recruit, support, and innovate.

As you form EfM communities of action, let the EfM staff know how we can support you in this new ministry. Call headquarters at 800.722.1974 to ask for advice or to request promotional materials to distribute. Above all, tell us your stories so that we can share them with the entire EfM family.

Cynthia Hargis
EfM Program Coordinator

Trinity Institute January 21-23, 2008 "Religion and Violence, Untangling the Roots of Conflict"

While people of faith raise prayers for peace, stories of religiously fueled violence fill the news. Critics question whether the world can afford to tolerate a force as destructive as religion. Is violence an inescapable result of religious commitment, or is it a distortion, a human projection on a God in whom there is no violence? Is it the sole province of extremists, or do the roots of conflict touch all persons of faith?

"The exploration of the deeply rooted union of religion and violence, and the resources within various faith traditions to live together in peace without losing the uniqueness of their faith, will be the focus of Trinity Institute's 2008 conference" (Episcopal News Service). The topic, "Religion and Violence," will be addressed by an inter-faith forum of prominent theologians representing Christianity, Islam and Judaism. Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori will preach at the opening Evensong. In New York and at regional conferences there will be opportunities after each lecture for theological reflection in small groups led by skilled facilitators. The conference will also be telecast online and available on demand following the conference. In order to learn more about the 38th Trinity Institute, go to: <http://www.trinitywallstreet.org/education/?institute-default>.

The School of Theology, Sewanee, TN, will co-host the January conference as one of the regional conference centers. Participants in Sewanee will view the sermons and lectures on a large screen after which they will join others in small groups to reflect on what

they have heard. Registration will open later in the fall, and the fee of \$30.00 for this event will include all activities.

We encourage you to bring your EfM group or Sunday School class and engage in conversation about the critical issues addressed by this conference. You will find companions at this conference who share concerns about the religiously fueled violence filling the news and want to explore “how religion can be a powerful force for peace within ourselves, our families, our communities, and the world.” (ENS)

If you would like to learn more about the web cast in Sewanee, please contact:

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Reflections from Idaho

On a recent trip to Idaho for mentor training, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to spend time with the bishop of Idaho, the Rt. Rev. Harry Bainbridge, and EfM’s coordinator there, Les Parsons. Bishop Bainbridge’s longtime relationship with EfM began in the 1970’s, when he was a mentor for the newly emerging program of theological education for laity.

We enjoyed sharing our stories related to EfM and especially our common belief that EfM creates an opportunity to learn how to balance a life of worship, study and action. When out of balance, our lives can become unsustainable and subject to burnout. EfM is often described as a two-rail fence – the fence posts are the regular meetings grounded in worship and prayer and connected by knowledge and experience. Mentors are guides who ensure that these essential elements of EfM are maintained so that students develop a sense of balance and wholeness in their lives. The circle of trust formed in EfM groups allows participants to support one another in seeking wholeness.

EfM’s underlying premise is that God calls all believers to lives of ministry. As we listen to the voices from tradition, culture, position and experience, we reflect in community on how those voices lead us to discern our ministry. We are often sad to leave the community at graduation, but EfM misses the mark if it has not nudged us out to the ministry we are called to do. Les always closes theological reflection with the questions, “How will this reflection change your life? What will you do differently?”

I returned to Sewanee reenergized for the work I am doing by that wonderful visit with Bishop Bainbridge and Les on a bright summer morning in Idaho. Thank you both for sharing your time and talents with EfM.

Sissie Wile
EfM, Assistant Director

Companioning

Companioning is about **honoring the spirit**; it is *not about focusing on the intellect*.

Companioning is about **curiosity**; it is *not about expertise*.

Companioning is about **learning from others**; it is *not about leading*.

Companioning is about **walking alongside**; it is *not about leading*.

Companioning is about **being still**; it is *not about frantic movement forward*.

Companioning is about **discovering the gifts of sacred silence**; it is *not about filling every painful moment with words*.

Companioning is about **listening with the heart**; it is *not about analyzing with the head*.

Companioning is about **bearing witness to the struggles of others**; it is *not about directing those struggles*.

Companioning is about **being present to another person’s pain**; it is *not about taking away the pain*.

Companioning is about **respecting disorder and confusion**; it is *not about imposing order and logic*.

Companioning is about **going to the wilderness of the soul with another human being**; it is *not about thinking you are responsible for finding the way out*.

-Submitted by Jennifer Gamber from the Center for Loss web site.

Did you know...

2007 marks 30 years of EfM in Canada?

Happy Anniversary EfM Canada!

Don't Forget to Visit our Web site

Many helpful resources can be found on the EfM Web site. These include the course prospectus, sample lessons and the common lessons for 2007-08, the most current mentor training schedule and an archive of recent newsletters. Visit us on the Web at: <http://www.sewanee.edu/EFM/index.htm>.

Join Sewanee's Anglican Tour May 29-June 9, 2008

The annual *Worship and Travel with Sewanee: A Tour Course in Anglican History and Spirituality*, sponsored by the University of the South's School of Theology, is accepting reservations for the May 29-June 9, 2008 tour. The Anglican Tour is open to anyone who desires to study and experience the special historical heritage of Christianity in England and the vibrant spiritual life of the present Church of England. Tour members will discover acres of intricate stonework and stained glass, a semester-length course on British history, and a host of beautiful choral evensongs. *Worship and Travel with Sewanee* was designed by the School of Theology for laity and clergy participants as well as Sewanee students enrolled in graduate degree programs, who can earn academic credit. For complete Anglican Tour details, contact the Rev. Anne B. Chisham, director of Anglican Tours, by calling 800.438.2403, or E-mailing: abcrev@cox.net.