

# Education for Ministry: A Prospectus

*EfM is a four-year distance-learning program in theological education from the School of Theology at the University of the South.*

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Every baptized person is called to ministry. During the Service of Confirmation we ask God to “Renew in these your servants the covenant you made with them at Baptism. Send them forth in the power of the Spirit to perform the service you set before them.” The Education for Ministry (EfM) program provides people with an opportunity to discover how to respond to the call to Christian service and carry out their ministries.

## The History and Scope of EfM

The Education for Ministry program began with a vision of enrolling a few hundred learners. Within a few years it developed into a program reaching several thousand participants with groups around the globe.

In addition to EfM groups throughout the USA, EfM can be found in Great Britain, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, the Bahamas, Hong Kong, and Botswana. Over 80,000 persons have participated in the program, and in the United States more than 35,000 have completed the four years. About 7300 learners enroll each year in the USA. Ninety of the 110 dioceses of the Episcopal Church as well as other denominations have contractual arrangements with EfM.

### The University of the South

*The University of the South is located on the Cumberland Plateau in south central Tennessee. It is governed by twenty-eight dioceses of the Episcopal Church.*

*The University of the South first opened in 1868. It has a College of Arts and Sciences with approximately 1,300 students, a School of Theology with approximately 80 full-time students, and a summer graduate school. EfM was established in 1975 as a distance-learning program of the School of Theology. The University of the South is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and the School of Theology is accredited by the Association of Theological Schools.*

*The University of the South, affectionately called Sewanee, is well known for producing church leaders. Three of the past five presiding bishops of the Episcopal Church graduated from Sewanee.*

### Using EfM

Lay persons face the difficult and often subtle task of interpreting the richness of the church’s faith in a complex and confusing world. They need a theological education that supports their faith and also teaches them to express that faith in day-to-day events. As the emphasis on lay ministry has grown, EfM has come to play an important role by providing a program that develops an informed and knowledgeable laity.

### Our Call to Minister in the World

The EfM program does not evaluate or recommend individuals for ordination. Many people think that one must be ordained in order to be “a minister.” The fact is that all baptized Christians are called to be active participants in the church’s ministry. This fundamental ministry is nothing less than the exercise of the church’s vocation to continue the ministry of Jesus. He reconciled the world to God. We are called to incarnate that reconciliation in our own time and in our own place through worship, service to others, and by proclamation of God’s Word to all people.

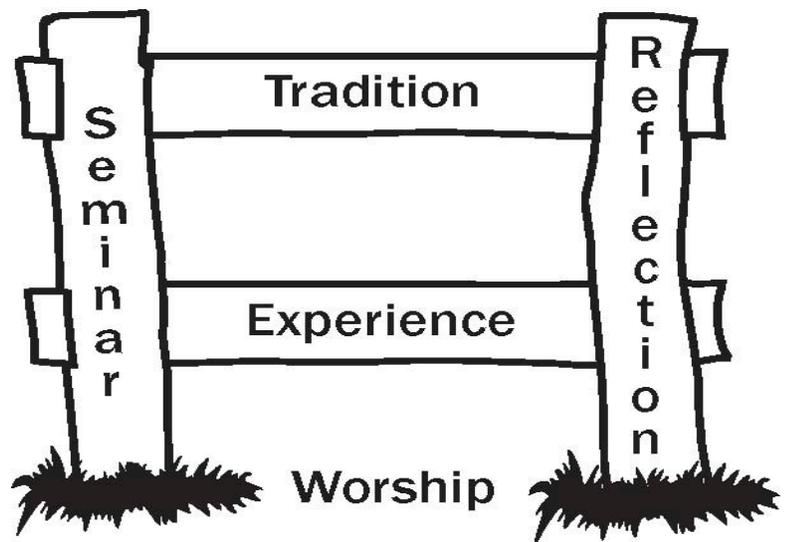
The EfM program is preparation for the ministry to which we all are called. It is that vocation for which we pray at the end of the Eucharist: “And now, Father, send us out to do the work you have given us to do, to love and serve you as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord.”

The preparation for ordination vows usually takes place at a residential seminary. There candidates develop their knowledge of Holy Scripture and theology and grow in the skills of preaching, leading worship, and administering the church’s sacraments, as well as in their ability to be spiritual directors. The EfM program does not teach these skills.

## The Program

The seminar group is the nucleus of the Education for Ministry program. A group consists of six to twelve participants and a trained mentor who meet weekly over the course of a nine-month academic year. These meetings are usually from two and a half to three hours in length.

Through **study**, **prayer**, and **reflection**, EfM groups move toward a new understanding of the fullness of God’s kingdom. This process can be illustrated by a two-rail fence. One rail is the Christian tradition. The other is the collective experience of the group’s members. The rails are linked by fence posts representing the seminar sessions and group practice of theological reflection where life and study meet. The fence is grounded in the soil of regular worship that is vital to the life of the group.



Participants are given weekly assignments to study with the help of resource guides. As adult learners, group members are responsible for setting their own learning goals. They spend between two and four hours in study and preparation each week. In the seminars members have an opportunity to share their insights and discoveries as well as to discuss questions the study materials raise for them.

Through discussion and guided reflection, the seminars furnish an opportunity to deepen understanding of the reading materials.

More important is the development of skills in theological reflection. The goal is to learn to think theologically. By examining their own beliefs and their relationship to our culture and the tradition of our Christian faith, participants can learn what it means to be effective ministers in the world. In coming to terms with the notion that everything we do has potential for manifesting the love of Christ, we discover that our ministry is at hand wherever we turn.

The seminar is supported by a life of prayer and regular worship. EfM groups are encouraged to develop a pattern of worship appropriate to their situations. Resources for worship are furnished with the course materials.

### EfM Online

While most EfM groups meet in local parishes, a growing number of groups are meeting entirely online. EfM Online allows learners who cannot attend a weekly face-to-face meeting to participate in the program using a learning platform provided through the University of the South. More information about this option is available on the EfM website: [www.sewanee.edu/EFM/EFMONLINE.htm](http://www.sewanee.edu/EFM/EFMONLINE.htm)

## **The Mentor**

Seminar groups work under the leadership of mentors who contract to serve as guides and administrators. They 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.

As administrator of an EfM group, the mentor is the person through whom the group communicates with the Programs Center. A mentor must work as an enabler rather than as an informer of people. Mentors may be lay or ordained persons. Criteria by which mentors are selected include: having experience in serious religious study, having a familiarity with methods of biblical scholarship, possessing a mature faith, being able to live with the ambiguity within the interpretations of the biblical tradition, possessing skills which help a group to develop its own life, and demonstrating a willingness to perform administrative duties.

Mentors receive an honorarium in appreciation of their service. They are independent contractors and are not employees of the University of the South. Where and when the seminar will meet, as well as exactly how participants will work together, are decisions mentors reach with their own groups.

## **Mentor Training**

Someone who wishes to be a mentor must attend a training session and be accredited as a mentor. Mentor training is available in Sewanee, in the dioceses under contract to EfM, and by special arrangements.

The period of accreditation for a mentor is eighteen months. Mentors must renew their accreditation by attending training to remain active. Only accredited mentors may enroll students for EfM groups. After mentors have completed their second training experience, mentor formation sessions provide new areas of growth and expertise for experienced mentors.

## **Enrollment and Fees**

The Education for Ministry program is a four-year curriculum. Each “year” is a nine-month cycle of study. Learners enroll for one cycle at a time. Groups may enroll in any month from September through May, although most begin in September or January. We do not enroll groups to begin in June, July, or August.

Each EfM group must be financially viable; therefore, groups must have a minimum of six learners. To maintain an effective learning environment and to provide participation for everyone, EfM groups may not have more than twelve participants.

At the time of enrollment participants pay the full year’s fee. In case of a move during the academic cycle, a participant may transfer to another group.

Participants in groups with institutional sponsorship pay a fee of \$350 for the 2014-2015 academic cycle. The 2014-2015 non-sponsored fee is \$460. Fees pay

for the EfM materials (all required books are provided) and the honorarium for the mentor. Participants also need a Bible and may wish to obtain additional materials suggested in the bibliographies. To assist those in need, a fee reduction provision is available, based on the enrollment of the group.

## **Sponsorship**

A parish, diocese, or judicatory can be a sponsoring agency. Contracts provide an official sponsorship link, honoraria for trainers to train mentors in the diocese, and a lower tuition.

EfM works with all denominations. Special contractual relationships cover agreements with other denominations and groups outside the United States.

## **Credits for EfM**

EfM grants 18 Continuing Education Units (CEU) for each year of study. There are no examinations or papers. EfM does not grant college credits.

## Contents of the Four Years

The texts in the EfM program offer perspectives on the entire sweep of the Christian tradition from the earliest period to the present: biblical exegesis and interpretation, theology, church history, ethics, worship, spirituality, and interfaith encounter.

While the course materials provide substantial academic content, the Christian tradition is not studied in a vacuum. The focus of the program is on life as ministry. Mentors and learners belong to small “communities of learning” in which the events of each person’s life may be examined in the light of the materials being studied. EfM provides Christians with the opportunity to develop a discipline in theological reflection, foundational to discerning and supporting

Christian ministry. Through regular theological reflection together participants sharpen their skills of personal and cultural assessment and enhance their abilities to be effective in a variety of ministries.

Groups generally meet for a nine-month academic year. The program provides a guide for thirty-six group meetings in five six-meeting units plus two two-meeting interludes (in which all years read and reflect on a common text). New members begin with the first lesson of year one. Participants in the same group may be studying at different levels. All texts needed for the year (with the exception of a personal copy of the Bible) are provided at no extra cost beyond the basic enrollment fee.

### The Texts

#### **EfM Reading and Reflection Guides (Used by All Year Levels)**

- Sharing Spiritual Autobiographies and Listening
- Thinking Theologically
- Developing a Sustaining Spirituality
- Integrating Belief and Behavior
- Vocation: Hearing and Responding to God’s Call
- 2013-2014 – Volume A: *Living Faithfully in Your World*
- 2014-2015 – Volume B: *Living Faithfully in a Multicultural World*

#### **Year One: The Hebrew Bible**

- *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* by John J. Collins (Fortress Press, 2007)

#### **Year Two: The New Testament**

- *Introducing the New Testament* by Mark Allen Powell (Baker Academic, 2009)

#### **Year Three: Church History**

- *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* by Diarmaid MacCulloch (Penguin Books, 2009)

#### **Year Four: Theology, Ethics, and Interfaith Encounter**

- *Theology for a Troubled Believer: An Introduction to the Christian Faith* by Diogenes Allen (Westminster John Knox, 2010)
- *The Christian Moral Life: Practices of Piety* by Timothy F. Sedgwick (Seabury Books, 2008)
- *My Neighbor’s Faith: Stories of Interreligious Encounter, Growth, and Transformation* by Jennifer Howe Peace, Or N. Rose, and Gregory Mobley (Orbis Books, 2012)

#### **Interlude Texts (Read by All Year Levels)**

- 2013-2014: Year A
  - *And God Spoke* by Christopher Bryan (Cowley Publications, 2002)
  - *Living on the Border of the Holy: Renewing the Priesthood of All* by L. William Countryman (Morehouse Publishing, 1999)
- 2014-2015: Year B
  - *The Bush Was Blazing But Not Consumed* by Eric H. F. Law (Chalice Press, 1996)
  - *Globalization, Gender, and Peacebuilding: The Future of Interfaith Dialogue* by Kwok Pui-lan (Paulist Press, 2012)