

EDUCATION FOR MINISTRY (EFM)

Questions & Answers

Question: What is the basic premise behind EFM?

Answer: 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 which 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.

Question: How diverse is the EFM program? Is it only available in the USA?

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

In addition to EFM groups throughout the USA, EFM can be found in **Germany, Great Britain, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, the Bahamas, Hong Kong, Italy, and Switzerland**. Over 70,000 persons have participated in the program, and in the United States more than 22,000 have completed the full four years. The 2006 USA enrollment reached more than 8,000. More than eighty dioceses of the Episcopal Church as well as other denominations have contractual arrangements with EFM.

Question: When does EFM meet?

Answer: EFM meets on a weeknight from mid-September thru Memorial Day.

Question: What is the time commitment to participate in EFM?

Answer: EFM meets from 6:30 pm to 9:00 pm one night per week. The time required to prepare for each week's class typically ranges from 2-4 hours. EFM does not meet during Thanksgiving Week, the two weeks between Christmas and New Year or during Easter's Holy Week.

Question: What materials do I need to take the EFM program?

Answer: The EFM program provides course materials for each academic year. Students will need a Bible. Course materials include a reading list for students who may wish to obtain additional books from a store or library, but there is no requirement to purchase these books.

Question: What is typical of a weekly EFM session? How do four separate student classes work?

Answer: Each EFM weekly meeting typically begins with worship led by one of the students. Theological reflections are also woven into the classwork as

directed by the EFM mentor. Each EFM class is given time to discuss their lesson for that week. Some weeks are devoted to “common lessons” that the entire EFM group participates in together. Lastly, each EFM session is ended with worship such as Compline or other appropriate order of service.

Question: What will I be studying in each of the four years?

Answer: 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 which represent the seminar sessions where life and study meet. The fence is grounded in the soil of regular worship which is vital to the life of the group.

Participants are given weekly assignments to study with the help of resource guides. Students 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 which 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. Liturgical materials are furnished with the course materials.

In **Year 1**, you will be reading and studying the Old Testament to include an overview of the history of Israel, the covenant of God with His people and Judaism and the beginning of Christianity and the world of Jesus.

In **Year 2**, you will read and study the New Testament to include Greek culture, the Roman Empire as well as Judaism and the Second Temple. Students will also study the life of Jesus as expressed in the four Gospels, Pauline Christianity and his letters as well as those of John and his Revelation.

Year 3 encompasses early church history from the early church fathers through and including John Wesley and the Methodist Church.

Year 4 will focus on the emergence of modern theological thought and the various religious philosophies, the rise of Fundamentalism, non-Christian religions and Twenty-first Century challenges facing us.

Question: What if I determine after a year or two that I no longer have the time to commit to EFM. Would I need to start over and re-take those years that I've already completed?

Answer: No. If you need to take time off from EFM, you may resume EFM at the start of any year's academic year beginning in September. In fact, some of our parish's EFM graduates took one or two years off to accommodate their personal situation.

Question: What does EFM cost?

Answer: The annual tuition for EFM is \$350 and includes all textbooks and materials required during the nine month academic year. Students may pay by check, money order or credit card (MasterCard, Visa or Discover only) upon registering for class in August.

Question: Are refunds allowed?

Answer: Yes, under certain conditions. A refund, less \$40 processing fee, may be made to a student if withdrawal occurs before the student's first scheduled meeting. A partial refund in the amount of \$107, may be made to a student who withdraws within 30 days of the first scheduled meeting. **No refunds will be made to students after 30 days of enrollment in the EFM program.**

A student who withdraws and does not receive a refund may join a group in the future and resume the program where he/she left off at no additional cost to complete the academic year. The credit is prorated and calculated from the last date of attendance.

Question: Can I receive Continuing Education Units (CEU's) for taking the EFM program?

Answer: Yes, The University of the South can award 18 CEU's for each year of work. Guidelines for granting CEU's require that the participant be present for at least 90% of the weekly seminars.

Question: Does the EFM program have a website?

Answer: Yes. <http://www.sewanee.edu/EFM/index.htm>

