

Is EfM a good fit for you?

by Paul Green

EfM. Education for Ministry. In one way, the name says it all. As the EfM website says, “Every baptized person is called to ministry. The Education for Ministry (EfM) program provides people with the education to carry out that ministry.”

But, in another way, the name doesn’t tell us anything at all, for what education could prepare *all* lay people to carry out *any* ministry? Think for a moment about the wide range of ministries offered at Saint Andrew’s; in my own case, for example, in the past few years I have ministered as a soup kitchen volunteer, Sunday School teacher, vestry clerk, member of a discernment committee, book cart custodian, acolyte, lector, and gardener. Each of these ministries draws upon a different set of skills and knowledge. What education could prepare someone to minister in all these different ways?

The education that we need for ministry, then, must be something different from the ordinary type of education that gives us skills and factual knowledge. It is, rather, an education that is designed to teach us to think about the world differently. The goal of EfM is to help us develop into people who see their world *theologically*—people who, when they encounter a new situation, look to where God can be found (and how they can be with God) in that situation. **Ministry is what follows in response to our perception of God’s presence.**

This kind of education is not an easy task. That is why EfM is a four-year course, with each year consisting of 36 2-hour small group meetings with participants at all levels of EfM. Under the leadership of a trained mentor, the centerpiece of each small group meeting is theological reflection, during which, using a range of methods, the participants work together to construct new ways to understand God and God’s work. Each meeting is a small step on a long journey to see the world differently.

To reflect theologically requires a great array of resources, and so participants in EfM study the Hebrew Bible in their first year, the New Testament in their second year, church history in their third year, and theology and ethics in their fourth year. (Thus, EfM requires several hours of outside reading each week to prepare for the small group meeting.) However, EfM is not an academic class; the focus is not on learning new information, but on thinking about how one can use that information in their daily life. There are no tests, quizzes, or book reports; there is lots of thinking about what value there is in studying a particular text. And also weekly snacks.

(For more information about the EfM curriculum—or for any other questions about EfM—go to efm.sewanee.edu.)

So is EfM a good fit for you? Well, if...

- ...you want to develop your capacity to see and participate in God’s work in the world
- ...you can commit to regularly attending a 2-hour weekly meeting and several hours of study each week for 9 months
- ...you are ready to share this part of your spiritual journey with a small group of people who want to grow with you
- ...you enjoy talking about your experiences with God and listening to others share their experiences of God

...then EfM is a great fit for you!

