



EDUCATION FOR MINISTRY AUSTRALIA

www.efmaustralia.org

Why Education for Ministry?

It comes as no surprise that most of the everyday ministry of Christ's church is performed by regular church members and not just by ordained clergy. The modern church upholds the ministry of the laity, emphasising that all baptised people have a ministry. Once we accept that, it is clear we need to be informed and skilled to do that ministry well.

EfM helps us to interpret the richness of the church's faith in our complex world and to express it with confidence, in both words and actions, in our day-to-day lives and in our own communities. **EfM can be summed up as Exploring Faith Matters!** It is formational and transformational for Christian life and ministry.

The EfM Heart: all people are called to ministry

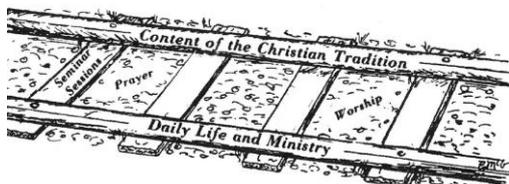
In small learning groups we find out what that means and how we can each be part of God's mission for the world. How can we, as part of the body of Christ who reconciles the world to God, share in that ministry wherever we are – in worship, in service to others and in proclaiming God's Word?

Many people come to EfM wanting more understanding of the Bible and the Church, as well as support in day-to-day ministry. Some want skills training to be better listeners, or to help others to faith or to support those in need. Some want to make connections between their faith and their everyday experience. These are the kinds of individual needs which EfM seeks to meet.

EfM Vision

We do EfM in small groups led by trained mentors. Through individual study, sharing our discoveries and exploring our faith together, we learn to think theologically. We connect what we come to know of the Christian tradition with our ordinary daily activities.

Imagine a train track! One rail is the content of our Christian tradition, the other our everyday experience. The sleepers are our group sessions to help us connect the two and to facilitate a conversation between them, all based on a solid foundation of prayer and worship in our EfM community.



EfM gives our Christian life journey a stable track on which to run.

The EfM Story

EfM was developed in 1975 by the Anglican School of Theology at the University of the South in Tennessee, and the University continues to update the program, most recently in 2014.

EfM has expanded internationally and ecumenically – with groups in Canada, Great Britain, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Mexico, The Bahamas, and Botswana and including people from other denominations. Over the years 80,000 have participated in EfM.

EfM began in Australia in 1978 and is now administered, under licence from the University of the South, by The Anglican Diocese of Brisbane as EfM Australia. In Australia over 2000 people have completed the four-Year program.

EfM group seminars

In EfM we learn in seminar groups of 5 – 10 participants: large enough to stimulate a variety of ideas and perspectives; small enough to ensure each member's voice may be heard. In these groups we consider everyday life alongside the materials being studied. We use various methods of Theological Reflection to help us connect our life experience, our attitudes and beliefs and our culture with the Christian tradition, and so discern opportunities for ministry. With the help of the group we consider how best to serve God in our everyday lives.

What EfM does **not do** is teach how to preach, how to lead worship or how to counsel people. Nor does it set out to prepare us for ordination as clergy or for our licensing as authorised lay ministers. EfM can nonetheless provide an excellent formational path towards these and other specific ministry roles.

EfM group mentors

Each group is led by an accredited “mentor” who guides the group and administers the program, but does not teach the Christian tradition. That's in the texts for us to read in our own time, though we explore these readings together. The mentor facilitates such group discussions and guides the theological reflections. Every mentor attends re-accreditation training every year led by qualified and accredited trainers. If you are interested in becoming a mentor you will need to contact the local EfM Coordinator or the National Director.

EfM design

The program follows core adult learning principles: we decide when and how we learn; set and follow our own learning goals; and have our own styles of learning. Most of us spend 3 to 4 hours each week on reading and reflection in preparation for the group seminar, then share our discoveries and explore matters further. For the majority of groups this takes 2½ –3 hours in a weekly pattern over 36 or so weeks, with scheduled breaks at times the group decides.

EfM has a four-Year curriculum and participants enrol one year at a time. In lots of our groups there are participants working at different year levels. Participants are awarded a certificate upon completion.

It is essential to the quality of EfM and to the life of the group that every participant understands clearly the commitment of time and energy that the program requires.

EfM content

EfM is a significant program. However, while it requires some commitment of time to read, reflect on the reading, share thoughts and experiences and pray together, it can be completed by anyone. It is based on books that cover the beginnings of the Christian tradition to this present time.

We learn how to read the Bible and make sense of it, how we understand God, ethics, ways of worshipping and praying, our spirituality and current theological issues.

The books we use are up-to-date and represent well recognised scholarship. Except for the EfM Guide, participants purchase their own copies of the text books from suppliers of our own choosing. Both hard copy and e-book versions of the texts are available.

EfM Reading and Reflection Guide

Upon enrolment each participant is supplied with the EfM **Guiding Text** for the year:

This guide includes sections on:

- ❖ Sharing Spiritual Autobiographies and Listening
- ❖ Thinking Theologically
- ❖ Developing a Sustaining Spirituality
- ❖ Integrating Belief, Behaviour, and Doctrine in a Multicultural World
- ❖ Hearing and Responding to God's Call

EfM startup

Local EfM groups contain at least five and no more than ten members. Usually they are located in parishes and readily welcome people from neighbouring parishes and towns if there is space. Local starting dates are established at the convenience of each seminar group but usually not during the months of December and January.

No prior qualifications beyond an ability to read discerningly are required for enrolment. Quite a few of us in EfM have had no previous formal study in either theology or other fields.

All newcomers to an EfM group start with Year One and do their own study whilst working at the pace set by the group.

Only currently accredited mentors can enrol people in a registered EfM group.

Each person enrolling in EfM makes a commitment to the group to participate in one full year of study and to share in its costs.

EfM fees

Group registration fees for each year are calculated on the basis of a general group fee and an enrolment fee for each individual member. Some parishes are able to pay the group fee as part of their contribution to adult education in the Parish. If this is not possible then the group fee is either divided between group members or they may undertake some fundraising.

For registrations in 2017 the annual group fee is \$1050 and the individual enrolment fee is \$185 - both include GST.

Each participant is expected to pay their share of the full year's fees even if he or she later discontinues. The question of any fee refund is the responsibility of the mentor and the group. If a member leaves the group his or her place cannot simply be passed to another person.

Participants may transfer to other EfM groups within or even outside Australia if there is a group available and able to admit them. People may return to EfM after a break in participation and resume work at the point completed if the texts remain the same. Normally those repeating will repeat the whole Year. Changes such as these require the agreement of the group as well as the mentor. Repeating, returning and transferring group members contribute to the payment of the group registration fees.

EfM support

EfM in Australia depends on willing group members and capable volunteer mentors. Everyone in EfM supports and encourages each other especially the mentors.

Each Diocesan Coordinator promotes EfM, links local groups, organises regional training events and schedules mentor training. Mentor Trainers (also volunteers) are first accredited and then appointed by the National Director to conduct training sessions in line with EfM requirements. They maintain the quality of the program and provide ongoing support for mentors.

The EfM National Office processes registration, dispatches materials, prepares certificates and manages overall administration.

The EfM National Director has oversight of the program and in consultation makes necessary policy, content and procedural changes in line with Australian needs.

There is a small group comprising of trainers, co-ordinators and mentors that acts as a reference/advisory group to assist the National Director in developing and growing *Education for Ministry* within our Australian church.

Anyone with concerns about how the EfM program is being conducted by co-ordinators, trainers or mentors, is welcome to contact the National Director who will attempt to respond in a manner which is satisfying to all involved.

EfM too much fun to stop ... EfM Alumni

The learning, growth and reflection experienced in EfM and the sense of community which participants develop has led to the emergence of EfM Alumni Groups across the country. Once we have completed the four-Year EfM program, we do not need to stop gathering, reflecting and learning together! The world of the Alumni awaits us.

EfM Alumni groups usually meet less frequently, share in theological reflections, and work with some of the new texts. For Alumni, EfM means “Equipped for Ministry”. Currently Alumni groups operate in Adelaide, Canberra, Sydney and Shepparton. If any would like to explore starting or joining an Alumni group, see the contacts at the end of this page.

EfM far out! EfM on-line!

For any of us in small, remote communities, or where there are too few people for an EfM group, the program can also occur online. Online mentors will help us master the necessary computer and internet skills. We find that the same adult learning principles and small group interaction lead to warm and supportive communities of learning with some interesting opportunities offered by being online. Contact the National EfM Office for information about undertaking EfM on-line in 2017.

Website: www.efmaustralia.org

EfM contacts

Education for Ministry Australia The Rev'd Greg Davies – National Director
PO Box 325 Gisborne Vic 3437
Phone: 03 5428 4038 E-mail: efm@efma.info

Diocesan EfM Coordinator Jan Craft - jan.craft22@gmail.com

Review

Ms Jan Craft

I commend the EfM course to anyone of any age or background who is interested in a deeper exploration of God's creative work in their lives. It is most definitely challenging but the journey is one worth taking for those seeking a vocation in God, engaged in ministry or simply possessing a desire to look more deeply into their life.

When I began to teach scripture in 2000, I found that it awakened many questions that I had left in childhood and I experienced a great hunger to explore my faith in a deeper and more real sense. The EfM course was a gift. I enrolled in 2005 and over the next four years I studied through the set readings, the Old Testament, New Testament, Early Church History and Theology. As we met each fortnight in groups, I was able to explore the connections between my life, my beliefs, the culture and scripture in theological reflections that formed conversations between these four sources of my world. Many times, the experience of examining the meaning in these spaces was both a revelation and life changing. I believe that EfM has profoundly shaped my Christian identity and given me the tools to reflect theologically, which is a skill I highly value. After four years I did not want my EfM experience to end and so I became an EfM Mentor and trained to be a trainer of Mentors. My enthusiasm for this learning community has endured.

EfM at its heart is learning in community. Your fellow group members are companions in this journey and so shared insights and new discoveries make this a rich and diverse learning experience.

Ms Jan Clark

What I liked

The history was fascinating, broad and open to discussion. Lots of things learned that just don't happen in the church setting of a service and a sermon.

Actually reading the Bible and thinking about that, and then discussing with others in conjunction with the notes.

Doing the EfM reflection which specifically connected the mundane to the cosmic.

Making a journey with people who thought they weren't bright enough to understand but totally were, because it is not an academic theological course. It is about personal experience and our connections to the Divine and each other.

What was helpful

Having a mentor to guide and keep the various tasks flowing but not dominating.

Food and a cuppa.

The long term commitment that was at times hard but so worth the effort.

All the supplied information.

What was not helpful.

I suppose the pressure of time to get the readings done beforehand and then doing all the tasks required at the meeting. The balance of letting people speak and clock watching was often tricky. Especially meeting at night when people arrived tired, recovered and engaged, and then got tired again during the reflection.

The experience of studying.

Certainly at times difficult to cover all the reading before the meeting. Can only do what is possible.

Of course there were areas that were less fascinating, but still informative about another aspect of being a Christian.

What it gave to me.

I acquired so much information and understanding about the bigger picture of the theology and culture of Christianity. This has helped me be calmer about our future. People do weird and at times very bad things, history and culture are fluid. But EfM gives hope that we will continue the good bits as we have done in the past.

The Reverend Judy Walsh

“Education for Ministry” or EfM as it is referred to, I believe, is a wonderful opportunity for everyone to not only broaden their knowledge of the Old and New Testaments of the Bible, of the History of Christianity and of the Church but also to draw closer to God and to our Christian friends through a program that encompasses so much. A four year course is certainly a daunting thought to begin with, but it was really just the beginning of an ongoing journey. There is an old saying “what you get out of something depends upon what you put into it” and my four A4/6cm folders grew to eight A4/6cm folders during those four years!

The thing I appreciated most about this course was not only the personal study I undertook, but the sharing of worship session, the discussions and reviews of the assigned work, and the personal presentations that we were each called on to make. Common lessons which led us to undertaking “Theological Reflections” was a wonderful experience which certainly helped the group grow together, encourage one another, and support one another in our times of need.

The fact that each night we discussed not only the lessons we had learnt this week, but also listened to the discussion and talks on those participants who were in a different year to us as all four years worked simultaneously along the way. This not only reinforced our learning, but prepared us for our future journey as well.

Bishop Sonia Roulston

I can thoroughly recommend EfM as a course of Christian education and formation. I have enjoyed EfM as both a participant and a group mentor.

I first did EfM prior to entering theological college. My EfM notes THEN proved very helpful in my College studies. As a mentor I have been able to use it in Parish Ministry and have enjoyed re-visiting the course in this way, as well as seeing people grow through the course.

I think one of the very attractive things about EfM is the balance between head learning, through the notes, and heart learning, through group work and reflection on experience. EfM theological reflections are quite unique and are as important as the readings. Imagine reflecting on the stories of our lives, the Wizard of Oz, and the Gospels and how they speak to each other, all in one reflection! In this way the course seeks to develop participants spiritually as well as academically. It also enhances the sense in participants that the great story of the people of God expressed in the Bible is also our story – we are part of that ‘story’ and it is part of us.

EfM is studied in groups and this is a key to the course. It is in sharing in the group meetings with others that new insights are gained, and the richness of the course experienced.

Finally, EfM is aimed at forming people for ministry, and the reflections seek to develop this sense in participants.

EfM is a more expensive study option, and there is a great deal of reading. Also, mentors (group leaders) must be trained and maintain their accreditation. However I would not be put off by these things. EfM is a rich and enjoyable course and I very thankful to have had opportunities to both study and lead this course.