

EDUCATION FOR MINISTRY

Education for Ministry, EfM, continues to provide the laity with theological education at a distance through a four-year program of study of the Old and New Testaments, Church History and Contemporary Theology. Participants in groups of six to twelve meet weekly to discuss their assigned readings, worship and share in theological reflection. A mentor trained and certified by the University of the South (Sewanee) School of Theology facilitates each group. The Diocese of Lexington currently has 14 groups mentored by 11 mentors or co-mentors and 109 participants.

The EfM community from across the Diocese gathered in May to recognize 12 new graduates of the program. Bishop Sauls celebrated Holy Eucharist and preached at the service at Christ Church Cathedral. This year's graduates were Katherine Bihl, Eva Chapman, Jo Ann Ewalt, Heidi Hiemstra, Addison Hosea, Elizabeth Hunter, Susan Kurtz, Louise Lorton, Geoffrey Pinkerton, Rebecca Thompson, Campbell Welsh, and Whit Whitaker. Friends, family, previous graduates and fellow students shared in the celebration and the reception that followed.

In August our diocese was host to two mentor training events also held at Christ Church Cathedral. Mary Ann Spiva and Richard Guentert were the trainers for 15 new and returning mentors. Each training session involves 18 contact hours of training – in addition to the fun times of shared meals and conversation. Mentors must be re-certified every 18 months.

This fall Addison Hosea began a new program to answer the perennial question: “is there life after EfM?” Many EfM participants find the community that develops in their seminar group so important that a real void is created when the four years are over. Addison started an EfM Reunion group which meets on a monthly basis and offers graduates an opportunity to get together for fellowship and theological reflection of a current topic in the news. The group is open to any EfM graduate and meets on the third Monday of the month at Christ Church Cathedral.

This past summer in Anaheim the 76th General Convention passed a resolution directing dioceses to formulate a strategy for lifelong Christian Formation. Education for Ministry students have already affirmed the value of continuing theological education and spiritual growth. The EfM program has certainly proved to be an important aspect of lifelong Christian Formation for well over 100 graduates in our diocese. As importantly, EfM offers participants both the knowledge and confidence to carry out the ministries to which they have been called as baptized members of Christ's body.

I am grateful to the mentors of this Diocese many of whom have served for a number of years and to Bishop Sauls for his continuing support and recommendation of EfM. I am always happy to discuss beginning new EfM groups in other parishes or exploring the possibility of an on-line group.

Respectfully submitted,
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Diocesan EfM Coordinator