

## **A statement from Ralph re: EfM f + Susie's comments**

In the summer of 2015, shortly after Susie and I moved to Apalach and joined Trinity, we were invited to participate in something called EfM, Education for Ministry. So, along with Jane Harris we became "Year One'ers". The journey together has been very meaningful and brought us closer not just as neighbors but as Christians of Trinity.

Education for Ministry (EfM) is a four- year program. In *Year One* you study the Old Testament; *Year Two* the New Testament; *Year Three* the history of religion; and *Year Four* readings are designed to deepen our understanding of our faith and ourselves. Leaders are especially trained for working with the EfM curriculum; in our case, Martha and Carol.

So, for the past four years, beginning in September and concluding the end of May, Jane, Susie and I would hop in the car and head for Trinity.

You might ask, what do you do while you're there? Each session begins with a brief worship service with a participant of the group leading that part of the session. That is followed by "check in" where each member of the group briefly shares whatever they wish about what is going on in their own world.

Then what? Taking turns, participants of Year One share what they learned, discovered, questioned about the assigned readings for the week and so on until all groups have had their opportunity to discuss the assigned readings for the week. For example, this year we have two participants in Year One; two in Year Two; two in Year 3; and three in Year Four.

If it's not your group's turn you listen and learn and ask questions as you see fit.

We then move to a time when all participants address a theological reflection, a reading, a topic that ties the day's activities together.

We close with prayer.

Has it been worth the investment in time and money? Yes! Does it entail substantial reading and contemplating? Yes! Were there times when I felt I didn't do my best? Yes! But through it all, I have come to realize and have been reaffirmed that I am a Christian who cares deeply about others; who has the right to question things that I fail to understand; who is capable of learning even at my advanced age; hence, willing to grow!

*To God be the Glory, Ralph*

PS: You don't have to be Episcopalian!

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EfM has helped me to see another facet of God-life that I had been blind to before. It expanded and deepened the mindfulness of spiritual being.

-- *Susie Wagoner*