



# Returning to the Mountain: Celebrating 50 Years of EfM at Sewanee

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In June 2025, I had the privilege of traveling to the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of **Education for Ministry (EfM)**. It was a time of joy, gratitude, and deep reflection—a gathering that honored the past, embraced the present, and looked with hope toward the future.

EfM, founded in 1975 through the vision of the Rev. Dr. Charles L. Winters, has spent five decades equipping lay people to engage scripture, theology, church history, and ethical reflection with both heart and intellect. For many of us, EfM has been more than a program; it has been a formative experience that reshaped how we understand ministry in daily life.

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## Worship and Reunion in the Chapel of the Apostles

Our celebration was rooted in the Chapel of the Apostles at the School of Theology, a space that radiates both reverence and welcome. Worship in that sacred space—surrounded by mentors, graduates, coordinators, and staff—was profoundly moving. It felt like a spiritual family reunion, stitched together by decades of shared texts, conversations, questions, and insights.

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## Listening to the Living Tradition

The anniversary events offered a rich blend of history and testimony. We heard from those who helped shape EfM's earliest years and from those who are innovating for the years to come. One recurring theme was how EfM helps people claim their **baptismal identity**—to recognize that ministry is not confined to ordination but is a calling for every Christian, in every place.

The stories were powerful: rural congregations revitalized by lay formation, multi-generational groups who stayed connected across decades, and individuals who found their voice and vocation through the discipline of theological reflection. Over meals, in workshops, and through worship, the Spirit moved.

## A New Chapter: Revised Curriculum and the “Wide Angle” Option

This milestone year also marks a fresh beginning for EfM’s learning tools. The **entire curriculum has recently been revised**, featuring new texts, updated themes, and a redesigned approach to theological reflection that speaks to today’s challenges and questions.

One of the most exciting developments is the transition to **Pathwright**, an intuitive online platform that allows EfM participants to access their readings, assignments, reflection guides, and other materials digitally. Whether you're learning in person or online, Pathwright helps create a more seamless, interactive learning experience—making theological education more accessible and integrated than ever before.

Additionally, a new one-year “**Wide Angle**” curriculum is now offered alongside the classic four-year program. It’s perfect for those who would like to return to EfM or sample its approach. The Wide Angle track invites participants to engage deeply with a diverse set of contemporary texts that expand and challenge their faith.

These books include:

- *Inspired* by Rachel Held Evans – reimagining sacred stories with honesty and imagination
- *Ladder to the Light* by Steven Charleston – drawing hope from Indigenous spiritual wisdom
- *Being Disciples* by Rowan Williams – practicing discipleship in everyday life
- *The Monastic Heart* by Joan Chittister – cultivating monastic values for the modern world
- *Church Meets World* by Winnie Varghese – boldly engaging justice, the church, and the common good

Across them all runs a shared call to an honest, rooted, and outward-looking faith—one that holds tradition and questioning together, grounds personal transformation in daily practice, and calls for active compassion and justice in the wider world.

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## The Mountain and the Moments That Follow

Sewanee has always been a “thin place,” and leaving the Mountain, I carried with me a renewed sense of calling. EfM’s impact over 50 years is clear—but its relevance is only growing. In a time when the church is discerning new ways of being, EfM reminds us that grounded, reflective, lay-led ministry is essential to the life of the church and the healing of the world.



And you don't have to travel to Tennessee to experience that "thin place." That same sacred space—created by prayerful learning, intentional community, and deep reflection—can be found **online**, week by week, with others answering the call to ministry in their everyday lives.

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## Join an Online EfM Group This Year

Three new EfM groups are forming in the coming months:

- **Beginning September 2025** – Mondays, 7:00–8:30 PM (Mentored by the Rev. Christopher Golding)
- **Beginning January 2026** – Every other Monday, 11:30 AM–1:30 PM or 12:30–1:30 PM (Mentored by Mandy Frantz)
- **Beginning February 2026** – Tuesdays, 7:00–8:30 PM (Mentored by the Rev. Christopher Golding)

Whether you're exploring your faith for the first time, returning after years away, or seeking a deeper way to live out your baptismal calling, EfM offers a space for learning, questioning, and growing—alongside others doing the same.

To learn more or express interest in joining one of these upcoming groups, please reach out: [efm@episcopalhawaii.org](mailto:efm@episcopalhawaii.org)

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**Here's to the next fifty years of faithful learning and ministry—wherever we gather.**

On the diocesan website:

<https://www.episcopalhawaii.org/efm-education-for-ministry.html>