

EfM Online



The Director of EfM UK Gary O'Neill is planning to start the first online EfM group in the United Kingdom. The creation of online groups is one of the ways in which EfM is growing in the States and Canada and currently there are over 20 mentors and groups there.

So what does an online group look like and how would it work in the UK?

EfM online groups have up to 8 students plus an online mentor and operate in similar ways to an ordinary EfM Group. If you register as a student you will receive your materials in the usual way: a textbook in the form of a three-ring binder for the year in which you are enrolled with a chapter for each of the 34 weekly sessions of the course. Each week's chapter gives an introduction to the material to be covered, some background and insights into the subject at hand, questions to consider, exercises which may be completed, and assignments for reading the Bible or other documents. The textbook also discusses important information relating to the week's readings.



A traditional EfM group would then meet once a week for approximately 2 ½ hours in order to worship together, socialise, study the chapter for the week and participate in theological reflection. The difference with an online group is that this is done in your own home sat in front of your computer, probably for about 1½ hours. During this time the group can engage with each other, participate in worship, share their thoughts about the week's studies and participate in a theological reflection. All this is done using a virtual classroom in which participants can see where each person places their comments - to those of you who are used to online work it's a bit like being in a chat room with a whiteboard. For Facebook users it's like seeing everyone's comments in your group as they come in and watching people write on the graffiti wall. Care will be taken over the first few weeks to ensure everyone knows how to get online and one-to-one telephone assistance will be given before the first online meeting.

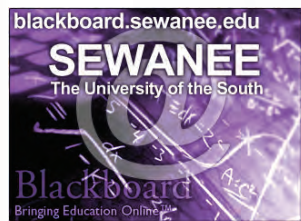
An online EfM group takes place in 'real' time at a previously appointed time, though there is also the facility to leave messages and comments on the discussion board throughout the course of a week.

In order to strengthen relationships between the members of an online group it is our intention to physically gather at least twice a year on a Saturday.

This first online group in the UK is scheduled to start in October with the first face-to-face meeting on Saturday, 24 October from 10 am until 4 pm. The venue for this meeting will be determined by the geographical spread of those who sign up for the new group. The online meetings will be on Monday evenings at 7.30pm.

An online group does not have some of the obvious advantages of a traditional EfM group, i.e. meeting weekly face-to-face, but on the other hand we are aware that there are some individuals who would like to join an EfM group but the nearest one is simply too far away.

If you would like to consider joining an EfM online group please get in touch with Haydon Wilcox the EfM Administrator or email with Gary O'Neill garyoneill119@aol.com



If you want to listen to the experience of students who are members of online groups in the States please visit the EfM Sewanee website and go to the online group section by following this link: <http://www.sewanee.edu/EFM/EFMONLINE.htm> in the UK we have the ability to run online groups by using software made available to us by the University of the South which is the home of EfM. You can find out more about EfM's home by going to: <http://www.sewanee.edu/EFM>

The fees for the online group will be the same as for an ordinary group and as with any EfM group you only commit yourself to join for one year at a time, though the completion of all the course materials would take four years.

To participate in an online group you need access to a computer at home or in a private space with a reasonably fast Internet connection and you need to be fairly confident using a computer. As indicated above, tuition will be given prior to accessing the online group and there will be an opportunity to discuss further any problems at the face-to-face meeting in October.

Do get in touch as soon as possible if you are interested because once the eight places have gone there will be a waiting list for the second online group.

Gary O'Neill

Please contact our administrator if you would like more information about EfM

Haydon Wilcox
EfM UK Administrator
Telephone: 01252 621639
E-mail: haydonwilcox@mac.com

visit our new website - www.efmuk.org.uk

EfM on line - the group members' view

One of the online mentors in America, Kay Flores, was asked by our UK Trainer Maggie Powell what her group students thought of the online EfM experience, so she emailed them to get their perspective. She was overwhelmed by the strength, quantity and quality of the replies.

Here are just a few highlights of what some of her group said:

"Initially, I was concerned that it would be too difficult to have deep, spiritual enlightenment without face-to-face communication, and I was pleasantly surprised. Even without the aid of observing body language or tone of voice, our personalities come through - even in our 'silence' despite typing skill. We even tell jokes, laugh, pray spontaneously, and pick up lost threads that might be forgotten in oral-aural communication as our thoughts spill over on some exciting topic or AHA moment. All in all, online EfM has been a tremendous experience and, I'd recommend this method to committed seekers around the globe."

Wynett, Silver Spring, Maryland, USA

"I have participated in both face-to-face and online EfM and have enjoyed both. The joy of EfM online has been being able to have theological conversations with people across the country. We bring our regional contexts and stories with us to the group and it's given me an appreciation of the variety of experiences in the Episcopal church in the USA. I've also enjoyed the text discussion because I feel much more relaxed-less "on the spot" - to develop and express a position statement. Someone can ask a question on the Discussion Board and I have days (not just minutes) to respond. I find this enhances respect and mutuality in our exploration."

Jenifer (an EfM online mentor)

"This is my fourth year of EfM. I completed two years of face-to-face EfM in my home parish and have done my third and fourth years online. While both methods have their strengths and weaknesses, I believe that my online experience has been the most rewarding. By working together on the lessons, theological reflections, and common prayers, the online group has become a vibrant Christian community that supports and encourages me in my ministries. Since the community is always connected via email and through the online Discussion Board, the community is always available to me. It is there when I want or need it and always provides a safe and loving place to explore beliefs and to try out new spiritual insights. There are no 'lone' Christians in online EfM. "

Dr. Lee Montgomery, Associate Provost, Southern Utah University

"I love EfM online! EfM online is great for people like me who live in places that don't have the possibility of having a face-to-face group. I have wanted to do EfM for years, but we have lived in small towns and not been in congregations where there were enough people willing to make the kind of commitment EfM takes."

Sue - Iowa



As a newcomer

really set it apart from other Bible studies I've attended - and which give plenty of food for thought in daily life. In the short time that I've been with EfM, I have learned and grown quite a lot.

I will be moving to Luxembourg this summer and have recently been accredited as an EfM mentor. There is a passion within for spiritual growth - for myself and others - through study, reason and prayer - and I hope to find others in Luxembourg who might appreciate EfM and all that it offers.

As a newcomer to EfM, I have enjoyed the richness and depth of discussion, supportive prayer and thought-provoking reading materials provided by the programme. In addition to the private study element, EfM has offered me a dynamic, stimulating forum in which to share ideas and allow one's preconceptions to be challenged in a loving, safe environment. I have especially appreciated the theological reflections and the other Common Lessons, which



by Tracey Blunn

Where EfM can take you

I did three years of EfM study from 2005 to 2008.

During that time my church life evolved from sidesperson to server, server to PCC secretary and from there to Church Warden. In 2007 I joined the EfM management team.

February of this year I went to Chennai, India to help set up a library at an orphanage and school called MBKG Pannai.

A lady from my church called Eve had asked me in September 2008 if I was interested in going with herself, Hattie and Cecilia. I said yes. Eve went out with Hattie in January to start the ball rolling. Cecilia and I flew out on February 1st.

As we left Birmingham Airport it started to snow.

Cecilia and Hattie were primarily going to help with the nursery children. Eve and I would be setting up the library. But as it happened we all took a role in the organisation of the library.

Our first flight was from Birmingham to Dubai. We had three hours wait in Dubai Airport to catch the flight to Chennai leaving at three in the morning - no sleep. As I stepped out of Chennai airport the heat hit me.

As we made our way through the crowd I saw an Indian man holding a card with Cecilia's and my name on it - this made me laugh as I'd never experienced that before.

We piled in to Jeshida's jeep and made our way to Pannai. With no seat belts the ride was an experience I shall never forget.

I thought traffic was mad in Italy but India does not compare.

They don't signal they beep. So as we were hurtling down the road, cars, lorries, buses and rickshaws were all beeping to overtake each other. The motorbike riders don't wear crash helmets and the women in their saris, sit side saddle behind. Sometimes the women can be seen holding a baby or young child - scary. The roadside is occupied by cattle and goats grazing or lounging around. Dogs are abundant.

My accommodation at the orphanage was basic. It was a wrought iron bed with a plastic covered mattress. One pillow and one sheet over the mattress. It was too hot to need any more. The Orphanage is Christian led. A normal toilet (thank you God) but a cold shower - which was quite nice after a hot day. The food was not as hot as I had feared and did vary from rice dishes to pancakes-come-omelette - type things with a curry, which wasn't too spicy and on the whole didn't set my gums on fire.

The majority of my days were spent in the library recording the books onto the excel spreadsheet that I had created. In the end the computer count of the books was 1,111. The books were entered in categories - fiction alphabetically by Author and non fiction using the Library Dewey System: 000 being Computer Science, 100 Philosophy and Psychology, 200 Religion and so on. The book shelves were labelled accordingly.

The orphanage, to save money, cuts off electricity between 10 am and 2 pm, so during that time, as I was unable to use the computer, I would help write out the library tickets for the books.

The adults and the children were lovely. The children got up really early (5 am) to do their chores and then they had a time of prayer before breakfast. After breakfast they went to school.

The really young children had nursery teachers. Cecilia had taken some toys out with her and the children had great fun playing with the hoops and learning the colours of the hoops - in English. Cecilia had been given some money from people back in England to spend on toys for the younger children. So on Saturday (7th Feb) Jeshida drove us in his jeep to Velore.

There Cecilia managed to purchase some tricycles at an astonishingly cheap price. It was while they were bargaining I spotted a couple of monkeys on top of the wall across the road. I found the monkey a bit more

exciting than children's toys so I got my camera out and went nearer to take some photos.

The Orphanage was very prayerful. The children said grace before every meal. After supper the children watered the plants.

At about 9 pm the children held a prayer time in their various cottages. The children were astonishing in their conduct and the first time I went (by invitation) to one of the cottages, I was moved to tears as I listened to the children as they sang hymns, said prayers and read from the bible. They were so very different from the children back home but children all the same.

Two weeks later the library was up and running. At the school assembly on the morning of February 13th we were each presented with two silver ankle chains.



The children loved the books, the jigsaw puzzles and the toys all bought using the money that was given to Eve and Cecilia by kind people back home in England. The children were really excited at being able to borrow the books - an experience they had never had before. The adults were also able to use the library and for them we had bought books that were written in Tamil.

16th Feb back home - All snow gone.

Surprise visit



The basic and mentor training events at St Columbus House Woking in May of this year was the cause for several celebrations. The first reason for celebration was that Maggie Powell (seated left in the picture) was leading her first training events as a newly qualified trainer. Maggie was herself trained as a trainer in the States during November 2008 and this is the first time EfM UK has nurtured a new trainer for nearly 7 years.

The second reason for celebration was the surprise visit by the Interim Director of EfM in the United States, Sissie Wilie. Sissie and her husband Fred were coming to the end of a brief cruise holiday and were due to fly out from Gatwick the same weekend as our training, so they took the opportunity to come and say hello to us! Sissie is seated on the right of the above picture with our own UK Director Gary in the middle. While she was here she and her husband Fred posed with two of their compatriots and our trainee mentors Lea and Sue, both of whom first came across an EfM at home in the United States. EfM is truly an international experience!



Fees

The student fees for those enrolling for an EfM Group are now:

EfM students (full year) £195

The fee for mentor training inclusive of residential accommodation costs has been increased to contribute to the trainer's expenses.

Accreditation Training for those seeking to be mentors £200

On-going training for active mentors £165

Mentors are paid £55 for each student enrolled and studying in their group.

EfM CD's

In the next few weeks, the Programs Center of EfM in the US will begin the sale of EfM CDs. They will be available to active mentors and students and to graduates. Each CD may be purchased for \$25 or a set of 5 CDs for \$100.

The CDs are CD-ROMs which means that they are in a secured format that can be read only on a computer. The CDs have been provided in response to requests for a text that is easily transportable, and enables students to use a powerful search tool. The CDs are not audio nor can MP3 files be generated from them. For visually impaired students, mentors may contact Debbie Shrum, dshrum@sewanee.edu, to request unsecured versions of the CDs that can be used with text-to-speech software.

Calendar

If you want to enrol for mentor training or make an advanced booking for the Convention please email the Administrator: administrator@efmuk.org.uk

Basic Mentor Training

Dates for 2010 to be arranged - please refer to the EfM Web Site

Development Mentor Training for Experienced Mentors

20th – 22nd November 2009
St. Columba's House, Woking

2009 Convention and Award Ceremony

Saturday 3rd October 2008

from 10.30 a.m. – 2 p.m.
in Birmingham Cathedral

Speaker: Canon Nigel Hand
Canon Missioner of Birmingham Cathedral

Topic: 'How to help us share the Bible with other people.'

19 Students will be receiving their awards for completing the EfM Programme

There is no charge for students and active mentors. Additional guests are welcome at a cost of £5

EfM UK Management Group meets in 2009 on:

28th November

If you have any issues that you wished to be discussed by the Management Group then e-mail Joanna Hobart on: joanna@efmuk.org.uk