EFM Matters

December 2025

What's happening at EfM

Advent is a time for looking forward and when I look ahead to 2026 I feel quite excited.

In February EfM is hosting *The Journey So Far and The Journey Yet to Come* - two zoom gatherings that look back at EfM's past and at its future. You will find the details on page 9.

The new curriculum starts for New Zealand in February. EfM gets a totally new look and feel. The Reading and Resource Guide is now history for the full year course but will be retained for short courses. All the material other than text books will be in an online learning application - Pathwright. As well as text images, sound and video can be included.

Looking back at 2025 I am delighted at the number of people who have done short courses and I am inspired to try and produce more.

Enrolments in the full year course remain low. Can you please continue to pray for EfM, that our numbers may increase and that groups can be established in new towns and cities.

I hope that you and your loved ones have a very Merry Christmas and may 2026 bring you much happiness, peace and joy.

MJ Butler

Michael Crawford-Butler

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Chair's Christmas Message

"Carol our Christmas an upside down Christmas" wrote Shirley Murray. Summer now seems to be here to stay, the weather has warmed up and all of us reading this are involved one way or another in services marking our journey through Advent to Christmas Day. Most of our EFM groups in Aotearoa are finishing for the year (if not already finished!) and we are in the planning stages for next year. Mike and I will continue being part of a ZOOM group with a group of trainers and mentors from the US after the Christmas break. We've already shared the idea of a warm Christmas with them as we've observed the layers of clothing being worn over the screens! To quote Joy Cowley, 'it's beginning to feel like Christmas' (*Advent Calendar* in Psalms for the Road).

Who is Christmas for? When I hear someone say it's for children, I want to protest – how many children are listed in the Nativity stories? It's for everyone – it comes for all of us, that story of Emmanuel, "God with us". But too often there are stresses and strains that derail the hope, peace, joy and love of the story of God-with-us. There may be joy and laughter – there is also grief, for many reasons. A loved one's absence, fractured relationships, the grief of parents unable to give their children the gifts they wish or the meal, the grief of a person on their own with no one to share those days with when everyone else seems to have 'someone'.

A sign of hope is the unfurling of the koru – the main stem, then the brackets off that main stem, then the tiny brackets off those. Each unfolding a promise of hope, of new growth of something more. When one church couldn't find their Advent candle holder this year, a member made a new one (above). You might notice the alignment of the candles form another sign of hope.

Whoever you are with, wherever you are, may you find signs of hope these next few weeks, hope that lingers, gives you courage and strength for the days ahead. May you find joy in sharing these days with a community of God's people who wrap you in love.

Meri Kirihimete me ngā mihi me te Tau Hou! Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

God's hope, peace, joy and love be with you.

Leanne

EfM Aotearoa New Zealand – a Partnership Journey
The Reverend Tricia Carter, August 2024

He aha te mea nui o te ao? Māku e kī atu, he tangata, he tangata, he tangata.

What is the most important thing in this world? It is people, it is people, it is people.

This ancient Māori proverb sums up the story of Education for Ministry in Aotearoa New Zealand. To tell the story of EfM is to tell of its people, both within the wider church and nation.

Aotearoa New Zealand is a group of islands at the southern end of the Pacific Ocean. It currently has a population of five million people of which 18 per cent identify as Māori. These are first peoples of New Zealand, the tangata whenua (people of the land). When increasing numbers of settlers from other parts of the world arrived in the 1800s, the British Crown signed a treaty with the local tribes to establish a partnership. This, Te Tiriti O Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi), became the foundation document for governance. While there is much debate about the justice and efficacy of this document, it undergirds the general foundations of life and Ministry. There are two official languages within the country, Māori and English, and they are at times interchangeable, which can make reading New Zealand resources or visiting a little confusing at times. While the bicultural foundations and the place of tangata whenua are acknowledged, there are other layers. The largest city in New Zealand is also the largest Polynesian city in the world, including residents of Tonga, Samoa, Niue, Fiji, and The Cook Islands. Further immigration from Europe, Africa, India, and Eastern Europe truly makes Aotearoa a cultural and religious melting pot.

It was into this melting pot in 1979 that Education For Ministry was first introduced, making it one of the longest international partnership arrangements with the EfM programme. It arrived in New Zealand via an enthusiastic Ministry Educator from Christchurch who took a summer break at the University of the South at Sewanee. On returning home, news of this exciting programme discovery was shared across the Anglican Christian Educators network. A course which focused on "action/reflection" theological reflection as part of a small-group process of predominately lay ministers was a new possibility and, in metaphorical terms, the touch paper was lit.

Formal theological education outside of a seminary was very hard to access for lay people, and there was no uniformity of education across the different denominations, or even in dioceses within the same denomination. The one umbrella organisation at this time which had representatives from all denominations was The New Zealand Association of Theological Schools (NZATS). They supported the introduction of this new programme and entered into a licence agreement with the University of the South to provide materials so that EfMNZ could begin 'down under'.

NZATS held the licence, but the day-to-day running was left to the Educators network within the Anglican Church under an administrative and executive board. The Theological Education by Extension group (TEE) run by David Moxon was responsible for the oversight and training as the network grew. Trainers were recruited and visited Sewanee, and Mentor training was offered nationally to set the solid foundations. The energy that David brought to the initial task resulted in widespread growth within a reasonably short time. TEE carried this oversight role for many years and it was later to be restructured as DEFT (Distance Education Formation and Training).

Local clergy were encouraged to gather small groups within their parish setting, and people were identified to train as mentors for the groups. One of the issues with being so far from the University of the South was the maintenance of standards of Trainers. It was not practical, financially or timewise, to send all the trainers to Sewanee, so a uniquely New Zealand proposal was made. The Trainers would be accredited as a group with a representative going to represent them at the training. The representative was a different one each time to ensure continuity of standards. The accreditation of the trainer was seen as the accreditation of the whole group of trainers for that year. One year the representative would travel to the US and in alternate years a Sewanee trainer would travel to New Zealand and work with all the trainers. This model later spread to Australia, and combined New Zealand and Australia training events have been held. This solution was a wonderful seeding ground for a two-way flow of creativity, and the visit of key leaders from EfM Sewanee kept the relationship alive and real.

As EfM groups grew around the country, it became apparent that there were some practical difficulties transplanting an overseas programme. Year One and Two, which were Biblical based texts focusing on the Old and New Testament, were a comfortable fit. Year Three, with its Christian history focus, was more problematic. Questions were raised locally about the relevance of the distinctively American focus of the later history. One common question was beginning to be raised by participants: Why could the Aotearoa New Zealand story not be reflected in the texts?

In response to this, the EfM Board commissioned historian the Reverend Allan Davidson to write a companion book to supplement the American Story in 1989. It was initially planned as an additional three months at the completion of the four years of study – not to skip the history but to add to it. Christianity in Aotearoa, A History of Church and Society in New Zealand[i] was initially published for EfMNZ and was later to become a foundation text for all those studying church history at Seminary. It has since been revised and reprinted a number of times.

While waiting for the focused text to add to the reading list, the trainers worked hard on writing culturally specific Common Lessons. These replaced the ones provided with Sewanee texts and so, slowly, the indigenisation of the study began.

[i] Davidson, Allen: *Christianity in Aotearoa, A History of Church and Society in New Zealand*. EfM, 1989.

People who joined EfM seminar groups were seeing something of their own story in the pages of the texts and in the theological reflection models developing. This focus was reflected in the ministry training being offered for those entering non-stipendiary ministry who were seeking to be trained locally. The quality of the EfM programme and its variety and rigour was recognised as a good foundation for those who trained outside of seminary. By the early 1990s, completion of EfM had become the minimum requirement for those who were to be ordained or licenced as a Lay Minister within the Anglican Church.

As the growth of EfM groups spread across the country, recognition of the unique nature of EfM's theological reflection methods and its strengths was revisited by the NZATS. It was looking for a way to recognise prior learning and bring it together with other aspects of ministry training. It developed the Associate of Christian Ministry Diploma (ACM). This diploma had three areas, Education in Ministry, Education in Theology, and Education in Community. Completion of EfM was considered sufficient to qualify for the whole of the Education in Theology component. It was the only course being taught that achieved this outside of university papers. This pathway advanced awareness of EfM nationally and encouraged a boost in enrolments in local groups.

Initially, material used by EfMNZ was supplied by the University of the South; it was printed in New Zealand and adapted to reflect a little of the local context through its common lessons and the introduction of the Davidson history text. Course books were updated annually but essentially continued to follow the same format each year. The colour of the external folder might change, but little else.

Group numbers and participation across the country continued to grow throughout the 1980s and 1990s, with there being little other competition for this area in the education sector. Groups also spread into the wider Pacific as far as Fiji under the New Zealand training network. EfM was healthy and growing and laying deep foundations. By 1992, there were fifteen accredited trainers to cover the countries' training needs. Trainers were identified to ensure there was a balanced spread of training resources geographically, but at times they would travel to other areas to work together.

DEFT was eventually disbanded, and its roles and funding were devolved to the Ministry Educators of local dioceses. This presented EfMNZ with a problem if it was to continue. NZATS, TEE, and DEFT were all no longer existing, and so the licence arrangement to deliver EfM had no legal entity with which to partner.

Under the direction of Paul Dyer, who had been a foundational Board member since 1983, it was proposed that a formal independent Trust be established to be the Board of Governance moving forward. After much work, this deed was finally completed and signed in February 2001. The initial Board was split into two wings, an Administrative Executive and an Accreditation Executive. By the time of the signing of the Trust Deed, these had been merged into one Board Executive, and a representative of the Trainer network was to fill a space on the Board. With some minor revisiting in 2008 and 2014, this Trust Deed is still the foundation document for governance. The Board is led by a Board Chairperson who is elected annually. The Board was designed to include representatives from across denominations and education networks and to include both lay and ordained members. Methodists, Presbyterians, Salvation Army, Catholics, and Anglicans have served on the board over the years.

Unlike other parts of the EfM family, those within New Zealand receive no payment for their input into the governance board or for the role of mentors and trainers. The continuation of EfMNZ has always been heavily dependent on the generous spirit of those who offer their skills and time. St John's College Trust[i] has consistently made a grant available to cover a large percentage of the costs for running EfMNZ.

[i] St John's College Trust Board is a Trust that provides for education within the Anglican Church of Aotearoa and Polynesia.

EfMNZ has been blessed by a very stable administration and leadership over its forty-five years. The initial Board and the Trust Board have seen very few changes. The role of chairperson across the two boards has been held by the Reverend David Moxon[i], the Reverend Paul Dyer, the Reverend Peter Williams, Mr Bill Atkin (interim chair), the Reverend Judith Wigglesworth, the Venerable Tricia Carter and the current chair, the Reverend Leanne Munro[ii]. This stability in leadership has done much to enhance the reliability and reputation of EfMNZ and has helped maintain the story throughout the Board's life.
This stability is reflected in the students' engagement with the administrative face of EfMNZ. Administrators are the front line or face of the programme for those who enrol, and this important task was established by Barrie Gimson. Barrie was there from day one of enrolments and continued serving in that role for an impressive 30 years. She was followed by Judith Wigglesworth as an interim administrator while also chairing the Board. Valda McBeth was appointed as Executive Officer in 2014, in a restructured administration role to help address the introduction of the new programme. The current administrator, Michael Crawford-Butler, continues in these footsteps.

A major revision of the EfM programme resources undertaken by Sewanee in 2013 was to have an impact on the way forward for the planning and delivery of EfM. In the Southern hemisphere, the academic year runs from February to December, unlike the North American year. This placed some pressure on the Board to finalise plans for the transition to the new materials. It was decided that the introduction of this revised material would be delayed until the next academic year.

In the past, the material was forwarded to New Zealand and printed and bound by local publishers. The new material moved from Parallel Guides and Common Lessons to a Reading and Reflection Guide (RRG) and interlude books. Historically, the participants would receive the material for the year with no additional expectation of costs. The Board had to decide if it was looking to become a book importer, which would be an expensive and time-consuming exercise. It opted to provide the RRGs but students would need to source their own books from the range of overseas suppliers. This change had implications for the fee structure. The Board acted in 2013 to reduce the annual fees by the equivalent cost of the purchase price of the books. The new era of EfMNZ was launched with much fanfare in February 2014. This relaunch provided a good platform to reposition EfM in the ever-growing mix of educational opportunities providers. The annual report to the 2014 AGM of the Board summed up the future this way:

The Board looks forward with enthusiasm to the new era of EfM in this country. We are confident that a new spark is abroad and a thirst for what EfM has to offer. With the new curriculum and new staffing, we believe we are well placed for the future.

Alongside the relaunch, a group of trainers were commissioned to look at additional ways forward. It was recognised that a common concern of those exploring EfM as an option was the time commitment. There was a reluctance in the modern, busy world, to sign up for anything long term. The trainers proposed a ten-week stand-alone course based on the Chrisitanity in Aotearoa book, and Judith Wigglesworth was instrumental in researching and writing the new study guide entitled The Church in Aotearoa. One clear point of difference with the source material and the local context was an understanding of race relations. Some of the interlude books were focusing on a particularly American context, with its Afro-American story and language. The focus turned, to find more local texts that better fitted the reality of NZ's history.

[i] David Moxon was to become the Bishop of Waikato and later the Primate of Aotearoa New Zealand. He continues as a strong advocate of EfM.
[ii] The Reverend Leanne Munro was the first Presbyterian chair of the Board.

The new, intentionally bicultural course told the stories of the people of faith, and included all the same elements as a regular traditional seminar group. Participants would get a taste of spiritual autobiography, theological reflection, group worship, and study. Led by accredited mentors, this shorter course served as a gateway to the traditional full four-year programme. In the foreword to the new resource, Tricia Carter wrote:

While there is commonality in the wider Christian story we are also part of writing our own stories of God's love in action in our corner of the Pacific. Within these pages you will discover more about the unique character of the early church in these lands. And trace the development of the Christian story throughout the first 200 years.

It was a great success as a stand-alone offering and was also used as an insert for the traditional Year Three texts. The Board faced the future with optimism as it began to draw in new participants and resources.

Sadly the momentum did not last too long, as with the arrival of the global pandemic of Covid 19, EfMNZ was shut down almost completely. No face-to-face groups were able to be held as the country went into almost total lockdown. Groups did not meet, and many mentors and trainers took the time to reassess their commitments moving forward. There had been little facility for online groups prior to the pandemic and it proved a difficult time to start afresh. Some groups did continue meeting by Zoom, but outside of the main centres many rural communities struggled to access high-capacity internet connectivity.

Post the pandemic, EfMNZ finds itself in a place of serious self-reflection about a way forward. Many of those involved in leadership have been there almost since the beginning and have made the decision to step down or retire to make room for a new generation and new opportunities. It is time for a new beginning, but the core goal remains.

EfM'S goal is to fulfil the baptismal calling of many, in meaningful and well-resourced ministry, and to do this through a patient exposure to the story of the people of God, in the emerging wisdom and mutual accountability of a committed EfM group. EfM provides a balanced and timely programme of worship, group life, reading, and communal reflection, seeking to give confidence and resources and wisdom to committed adult Christians.[i]

In honour of the celebration of the 50th jubilee of EfM Sewanee, we offer thanks for the many opportunities that this partnership has offered to the New Zealand Church. Thankfulness for the professional relationships built, friendships made, theological ideas shared and challenged, and the opportunity be part of a much wider global family. Our partnership means that hundreds of New Zealanders have graduated from this programme and have been truly educated for ministry. The people of the mountain have truly blessed the people of the Land of the Long White Cloud.[ii]

He aha te mea nui o te ao? Māku e kī atu, he tangata, he tangata, he tangata.
What is the most important thing in this world? It is people, it is people, it is people.

[i] Final report to the EfM by the Reverend Peter Williams, 21 May 2013.
[ii] A literal translation of "Aotearoa" is "the land of the long white cloud".

Photos are from Frank Nelson's collection. They were taken at Wellington Cathedral when Frank was leading EfM there.

I know some of theses people but a lot I don't. Do you know the people in these photos? Please let me know. Michael Crawford-Butler

E.F.M

Exploring Faith Matters

The Journey So Far

and

The Journey Yet to Come

A reflection on EfM's 46 years in New Zealand

Two Zoom Reflections

February 1, 7pm. A reflection on EfM's past and future led by David Moxon.

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85355106511?pwd=0a3uLID8zvAs1muQEXPrY43dNcThMI.1

February 15, 7pm. Leanne Munro and Jean Malcolm lead a discussion on their experiences at EfM's 50th Anniversary celebrations in Sewannee.

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83546244657?pwd=eiLvYKba15MxoAHPBBe70d0FWBPY79.1

Both gatherings will last 90 minutes.

Mentor Training -
1 pm Friday 13 February to 5 pm 14 February 2026
Home of Compassion, Rhine Street, Island Bay, Wellington

EfM (Education for Ministry) is a programme of study devised primarily for lay people (though ordained folks benefit from participating too!). It provides four years of study material at a tertiary level, in a learning environment where the reading and reflection undertaken by the individual members of the group is then reflected on together at weekly group meetings and applied to everyday life and ministry.

EfM is a way to continually deepen the journey with God in the company of a group which provides challenge and support and co-learning opportunities. It has both academic rigour and a holistic, grounded way of applying that rigour to the realities of 21st century life, living into what it means to be disciples of Christ in our particular time and context.

To support the life of EfM groups and provide for the possibility of new groups forming, we need to have mentors who are trained in the skills needed to facilitate these co-learning groups.

A mentor is not an expert, or a tutor, but a co-learner with group members who has the added group skills to ensure that a safe, honest, non-judgmental learning environment is fostered.

If you think that you might have what it takes to be a mentor, and/or are interested in stepping into the adventure that is EfM, fill in the registration form on page 15 and come along to the training event in Wellington. There is a link to the form on the EfM Website at efm.org.nz/events.

Those attending the training will be asked to complete a 2-hour online training module. This gives basic information about EfM and asks about your skills in group leading so that training can be focused. Registrations close on 16 January 2026.

Coming to the training does not commit you to being a mentor! Come, taste, and see!

If you have questions or want more information, email Educationforministrynz@outlook.com

Trainer's Corner

EfM Week by Week

EfM Week x Week is a video resource for EfM Mentors. The video series offers an informal discussion about different aspects of the program that mentors might face. The videos try to address broad concerns that mentors might face during the year with tips and resources.

Each year, there is a syllabus that lists the videos in order of their publication. The video description lists the topic, guests, and running time, as well as where to locate the video in the Path.

Week x Week is a video series hosted by Karen Byers and Beth Cavey. The aim of the videos is to address specific issues mentors face, but anyone is welcome to peruse the video collection.

https://efm.pathwright.com/library/efm-week-x-week-225355/643595/community/discussion/

Please distribute this newsletter amongst your networks in the community.

2026 Book List

Next year we have a new curriculum. Only 1 book (Powell's New Testament) has been retained. Also Years 1 to 4 have been given different titles but the focus is still the same. For New Zealand, Year 3 has been substantially amended from what is offered in other countries to make it more focused on the Church in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Year 1: Who Is Israel?

Introducing the Old Testament: A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey by Rolf A. Jacobson & Michael J. Chan

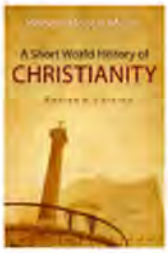
Bible Women: All Their Words and Why They Matter, Expanded Second Edition by Lindsay Hardin Freeman.

Year 2: Who Is Jesus?

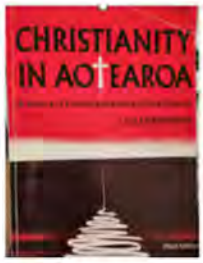
Introducing the New Testament: A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey by Mark Allan Powell

Mind the Gap: How the Jewish Writings between the Old and New Testament Help Us Understand Jesus by Matthias Henze

Year 3: Who or What Is the Church in the World?



A Short World History of Christianity by Robert Bruce Mullin



Christianity in Aotearoa Third Edition by Allan Davidson Available from EFM for $50 plus postage

Year 4: Who Are We to Be in the World?

A Primer in Christian Ethics by Luke Bretherton

The Spiritual Way: Classical Traditions and Contemporary Practice by Philip Sheldrake

See next page for all year and wide angle books

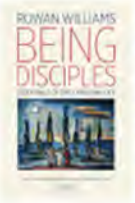
Please distribute this newsletter amongst your networks in the community.

2026 Book List (contiuned)

Wide Angle

Inspired: Slaying Giants, Walking on Water, and Loving the Bible Again by Rachel Held Evans (2018)

Ladder to the Light by Bishop Stephen Charleston (2021)



Being Disciples: The Essentials of the Christian Life by Rowan Williams (2016)

The Monastic Heart: 50 Simple Practices for a Contemplative and Fulfilling Life by Joan Chittister (2022)

Church Meets World by Winnie Varghese (2016)

All Years

This book is used in weeks 26 and 27 by all years. Groups are encouraged to invite former members of their group to join them for this book and also for week 18 which uses video material.

Sue Monk Kidd. 1989. *God's Joyful Surprise: Finding Yourself Loved*. Harper San Francisco.

E.F.M
Exploring Faith Matters

Education for Ministry
Administrator: Michael Crawford-Butler
62 Herewini St, Titahi Bay, Porirua 5022
Phone 021 246 0672
educationforministrynz@outlook.com

Education for Ministry NZ

Exploring Faith Matters

Registration Form

Basic and Inservice Mentor Training

Friday: 1pm, 13 February - Saturday: 5pm, 14 February, 2026

Home of Compassion, Rhine Street, Island Bay, Wellington

Purpose of Training

- To offer training in the EFM curriculum both for those attending Basic Training and for Inservice mentors
- To provide guidance in using Pathwright for 2025-26 The Journey with God, particularly Spiritual Autobiography and Theological Reflection skills
- To provide an opportunity for mentors to develop group skills and to share resources

Name	
EFM Group and Year/s (if currently mentoring)	
Previous EFM involvement	**Yes / No** (**If yes**, please outline previous involvement eg as mentor or group member, graduate, group mentored, year/s completed etc.)
Email address	
Postal Address	
Phone numbers (home and cell)	
Dietary restrictions / requirements	
Transport	**I do / do not** require help with transport
Accommodation	**I do / do not** need accommodation overnight **Friday** **I do / do not** need accommodation overnight **Saturday at my own cost of $100** **Accommodation for Saturday night is subject to availability**

- The training will be led by EFM Trainers: Raewyn Berkahn and Ailsa Cornell.
- New trainees, and mentors fulfilling the regular in-service component will all be expected to attend for the **entire event.**
- The training will begin at 1pm on Friday 13nd February, and finish at 5pm on Saturday the 14th.
- Accommodation for Friday night, dinner on Friday, breakfast and lunch on Saturday will be provided free of charge.
- EfM may be able to provide grants to cover the travel costs if that is an issue.
- All participants will be required to do some **reading** and **preparation** **before** the Training Event.

The resources for this reading and preparation will be provided when you have registered.

Preparation for the training

All participants will be required to do two hours of online study to be completed by Sunday 8 February. The training will be available from about 26 January. Details will be sent to you once it is set up.

Basic Training

Mentor training prepares a mentor for the task of starting work with an EFM group. Since the beginning of a group is a very important time, basic training covers the initial stages of a group's life together. The mentor is trained to handle the administrative work connected with an EFM group, to present the first few sessions to a new group prior to doing theological reflection, and to understand better the process of theological reflection. This Training will also include familiarisation with the EFM curriculum.

Participants are given feedback before the close of the training event regarding their readiness to begin an EFM group without further training.

Once trained and accredited to begin a group, the mentor receives a start-up kit for use in forming a group.

The start-up kit contains:

- Mentor registration form and letter of agreement
- Group enrolment form
- Participant enrolment forms and letters of understanding
- Information about the new EFM curriculum and resources
- Posters and information brochures

All participants in this training event will be required to prepare a short presentation of a portion of their Spiritual Autobiography, which will have been prepared before the event based on the resources provided by email or online.

Inservice Training

Inservice training is normally a requirement for all active mentors each six months after Basic training for the first year, and annually thereafter.

Current mentors/inservice training – the preparation is the same as the above. In addition, participants please bring:

- a short session of worship (5-10 minutes) that you have led with your EFM group. Please bring 15 copies. (we will use one or two of these at the training, and talk about worship, sharing our offerings amongst us as a take-home resource)
- questions or issues relating to your current groups.

All participants in this training event will be required to prepare a short presentation of a portion of their Spiritual Autobiography, which will have been prepared before the event based on the resources provided by email.

Questions?

Contact Raewyn Berkahn, EFM Trainer
021 245 2677
rpberkahn@xtra.co.nz

Please return registration by email by Friday 16 January, 2026 to:

EfM NZ Administrator (Michael Crawford-Butler)
educationforministrynz@outlook.com