EFM Matters

March 2026

What's happening at EfM

Francis de Sales said "Lent is the autumn of the spiritual life during which we gather fruit to keep us going for the rest of the year". Living in New Zealand, Lent is always in autumn. Francis de Sales says much better than I ever could how I feel during Lent.

For many years I have struggled to build a rhythm of prayer in my life. This year Lent seems to be maturing it. What is the fruit that you are gathering this Lent?

2026 has seen some big changes at EfM. The Reading and Resource Guide (RRG) is no more. All mentors and participants are having to learn how to use PathWright - our online learning platform. Some have struggled but many are enjoying the new platform.

There is also a new curriculum. As well as written material, there is audio or video content most weeks. Sarah and I have noticed that the reading workload is lower and easier to manage.

This year we have 26 people in groups, up from 20 last year.

Rutendo Urenje has joined EfM on a one year contract as Communications Facilitator. Her profile is on the next page.

MJ Battle

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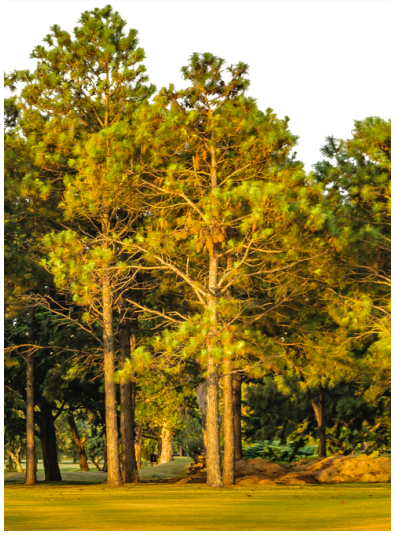


Introducing Rutendo Urenje

Working through FullQuiver Ltd, Rutendo (Rue) will be helping EfM with communications and promotion. Rue has been contracted for one year.

Rue writes " I am Zimbabwean by birth and heritage, married, and a mother of two young children under 3 years. Having lived and worked in different parts of the world, I consider myself deeply multicultural, shaped by diverse communities, cultures, and expressions of faith. I now call Aotearoa New Zealand home and feel genuinely privileged to be learning Māori culture and ways of being, and to be integrating these into my own understanding of community, faith, and belonging.

"My professional background includes international work across sectors and contexts, which has taught me how to listen well, communicate across difference, and serve thoughtfully within complex environments. Alongside this, my faith has remained central. I consider myself a missionary at heart and a lifelong learner, believing that our gifts and experiences are ultimately entrusted to us for kingdom work.

"In this current season of life, as I raise my children, I am intentionally learning to do less and to keep things simple. This has deepened my appreciation for formation that is slow, grounded, and lived out in everyday faithfulness. I love the Lord, and my hope is to serve with humility, care, and integrity, contributing in ways that strengthen others and honour the communities I am part of."

The Journey So Far
And
The Journey Yet to Come

In February EfM held two Zoom seminars to celebrate our 46 years of offering high quality theological education in New Zealand. Recordings of both sessions are on the EfM website (efm.org.nz). Viewing of both is recommended.

In the first, Sir David Moxon gave an address on the past and future of EfM. David was instrumental in getting EfM launched in New Zealand in 1979. The partnership between EfM New Zealand and the University of The South has been one of the longest theological co-operations.

While initially the course was presented as received slowly over the years, it has been adapted to include more New Zealand content. The commissioning of Allan Davidson to write New Zealand church history was the first and biggest step. This lead to the publication of *Christianity in Aotearoa* in 1997. Later Jay Ruka's book *Hūia Come Home* was used as an interlude book.

The Holy Spirit is already asking us to reimagine how to offer theological reflection in new ways. We have found ways to offer theological reflection outside of four year groups. We need to think creatively about more ways in which we can take theological reflection to small groups rather than expecting them to come to us.

(continued on page 4)

The Jouney So Far and The Journey Yet to Come continued.

David gave a deep analysis of the story of the cripple at the pool of Bethesda, who had been there for 38 years. Jesus does the unexpected. The cripple wanted help to get to the pool when the water stirred. Jesus is not interested in the pool but in the man.

David concluded this section with the thought "I wonder what would happen in the invalid recounted the story at an EfM group." We need to hang in there because there is no other programme that gets into the engine room of theology as EfM does. Those who have completed the four year program have the tools to continue mission and ministry that can survive the difficulties of a life of faith.

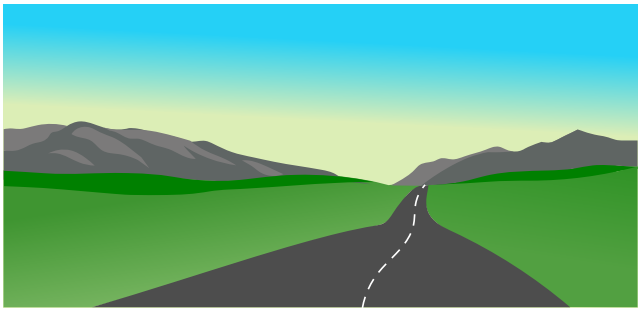
Jesus was a metaphorical theologian and invited people to bring their own story. To get to the heart and mind of the bible, it has to be done the way EfM does it - reading and then reflecting in groups, which is what early Christians did.

David mentioned the thinking of Iain McGilchrist who has examined spirituality, theological imagination and the mind and the body. He finds spirituality is best stimulated by the right brain driving the left brain. You a need a metaphor or image that encapsulates what you believe to be true. There is a tendency in western culture to discourage the imaginative and encourage the mechanistic.

In session 2 Leanne and Jean spoke about a song by Lily Lewis "My American Heart". We then broke into groups to do a Theological Reflection on the song.

Jean also spoke of her experience in presenting "Faith Grounded in the Whenua" and using whakawhanaungatanga with a group of Americans. She was astounded that, when asked to share about their family of origin, none of the people mentioned a place outside of the USA as a place of origin. At the second workshop based on this learning the questions were different, and when people spoke about their origins outside of the USA and the use of geographical features to describe where they are from, the atmosphere in the room changed. People made deeper connections with each other.

Two people who had never met before found connection by discovering they related to the same geographical features. Jean mentioned the joy of people being so willing to engage with things that were foreign to them, which she thinks comes out of the EfM whakapapa.



Please distribute this newsletter amongst your networks in the community.

Trainer's Corner

Listening with The Ear of the Heart

Our new EfM syllabus is encouraging us right from the start to practise "active listening" - listening with the ear of the heart.

It helps us to develop this skill when we also notice when others are listening to us with their whole attention, how they show us that they are doing this, and how it enables us to be truly present to ourselves as well.

Here is a tool to help with this noticing.

We have printed copies off and laminated them, so that people can make a note of a particular experience and then, later, rub that off ready to note down another such experience.

When someone actively listened to me,
with the ear of the heart....

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A Short Survey

Our new Communications Facilitator Rue Urenje has put together a short survey. Many of you will have had the link emailed to you. It will really help EfM tune its strategy for 2026 if you take 2 minutes to complete the survey.

https://forms.gle/pzbu6jwGbQkekFvPA

Rue's email is rutendo.fullquiver@outlook.com if you have any questions or suggestions for her.

E.F.M

Exploring Faith Matters

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