

## The Episcopal School for Ministry

The academic year 2019-2020 has been a year of transition for the Episcopal School for Ministry. How's that for an understatement?

Entering the fall term of 2019, ESM needed another place to meet in November. Eden Seminary, the school's long-time host location, was not available. Faculty and staff thought immediately of Eden's neighbor Emmanuel Episcopal Church, and they responded with open and practical hospitality. A dozen faculty, staff, and students met at Emmanuel for prayer, meals, classes and worship. "Emmanuel Weekend" was a great success, and faculty were soon planning a similar weekend for the spring 2020 term, and dreaming of future weekends at other parishes throughout the Diocese of Missouri.

Diocesan Convention 2019 was a highlight for ESM. We marked our 20-year anniversary at convention, and spoke privately with individuals about the school's mission, programs, and scheduling. A new student enrolled as a result, and the Spring 2020 term got underway with classes in Old Testament, Church History, and the Diaconate. Then, at the beginning of March, the outbreak of COVID-19 accelerated.

The pandemic pushed ESM from in-person, on-campus delivery of programs at Eden to virtual, online delivery. Faculty, staff, and students transitioned with dash and daring, adjusting quickly to the new demands and rewards brought by prayer, classes, and faculty meetings via video conferencing. ESM went fully virtual for the March weekend, and remains so today. The school stepped up its online efforts for the Summer 2020 term through enhanced publicity, reduced tuition cost, and other adjustments made conceivable and possible by the "new reality." Enrollment increased as former students returned, individuals seeking ordination supplemented their academic training, and diocesan clergy took courses for Continuing Education. A deeper transition also began during the summer as ESM leaders joined participated in focused conversations about holy dreaming with our new bishop. Bishop Johnson challenged us to envision ESM's place and possibilities within a significantly expanded and deepened ministry of formation in diocese. The school is up to the challenge, and actively helping bring the vision to realization.

A cluster of changes that we and others are calling "redesign" is evidence of the deep transition that is underway. With direction from Bishop Johnson and Canons Whitney Rice and Doris Westfall, in collaboration various stakeholders within and outside of the diocese, and with some possible new partners, ESM is seeking God's will in the redesign. Faculty and staff have implemented a Teach Out Plan by which students already enrolled in ESM are completing their academic programs and will receive certification. Our Teach Our Plan includes a temporary enrollment freeze. To better serve the redesign – which I remain thoroughly committed to and will, Lord willing, continue to assist – I have stepped down as Dean, but continue to teach classes in church history and theology. Dr. Ron Crown teaches New Testament; the Rev. Dr. Deborah Goldfeder teaches liturgics; Sr. Donna Ruth Hawk-Reinhard, n/AF, PhD teaches spirituality and church history; and the Rev. Dr. Barbara Willock teaches Old Testament, New Testament, and preaching. Debbie Wheeler serves as Registrar.

The Episcopal School for Ministry is grateful for the prayers and support offered on our behalf of over the past year, and we ask respectfully that both might continue in the year to come. We believe God has plans for Spirit-led, broad-based, multi-modality formation for lay and ordained ministry in the diocese and beyond, and we are glad to be at work with others in the diocese to see those plans become realities.

Respectfully,  
Rev. Dr. Marshall Crossnoe,  
Faculty Member of the Episcopal School for Ministry