

# MIDLIFE EXPLORATION: NYTS PROGRAM FOR LAITY

Elliott #1305

Groups on Manhattan and  
in N. Westchester

NYTS BULLETIN Winter/79

An unemployed junior high school teacher in Harlem, bitter about "the System" but hopeful about the Lord of Life, sits between an overemployed Madison Avenue executive who wonders whether his life can become his own again and a tenured art professor who wonders whether he is giving away his life in the best way he can for the glory of God and the joy of the earth. Across the room is a pastor's wife who is perplexed as to how she can be real in public without "blowing my husband's ministry." The three help her to focus on the question of **her** ministry.

The four are in a group limited to twelve who share three realities: (1) Christian commitment; (2) "mid-life" (a state of transitional mind, more than a biological age-span); and (3) the will to explore life-and-ministry possibilities "from here on out." Helping them to help each other in this peer-learning process is Willis Elliott, the Seminary's dean of Exploratory Programs.

What questions do people most often ask about this program whose flier states that it is "For Christians with executive responsibility?" Here are the main ones, together with Dr. Elliott's usual responses:

**1. Is it just for laity who want to become ministers?**  
Laity are already ministers, and the program can help them to be better ministers where they are. Only about one-third of those who graduate from this nine-month program actually change jobs; the rest become better witnesses where they live and work and worship, more faithful servants of Jesus in the world as well as in the church.

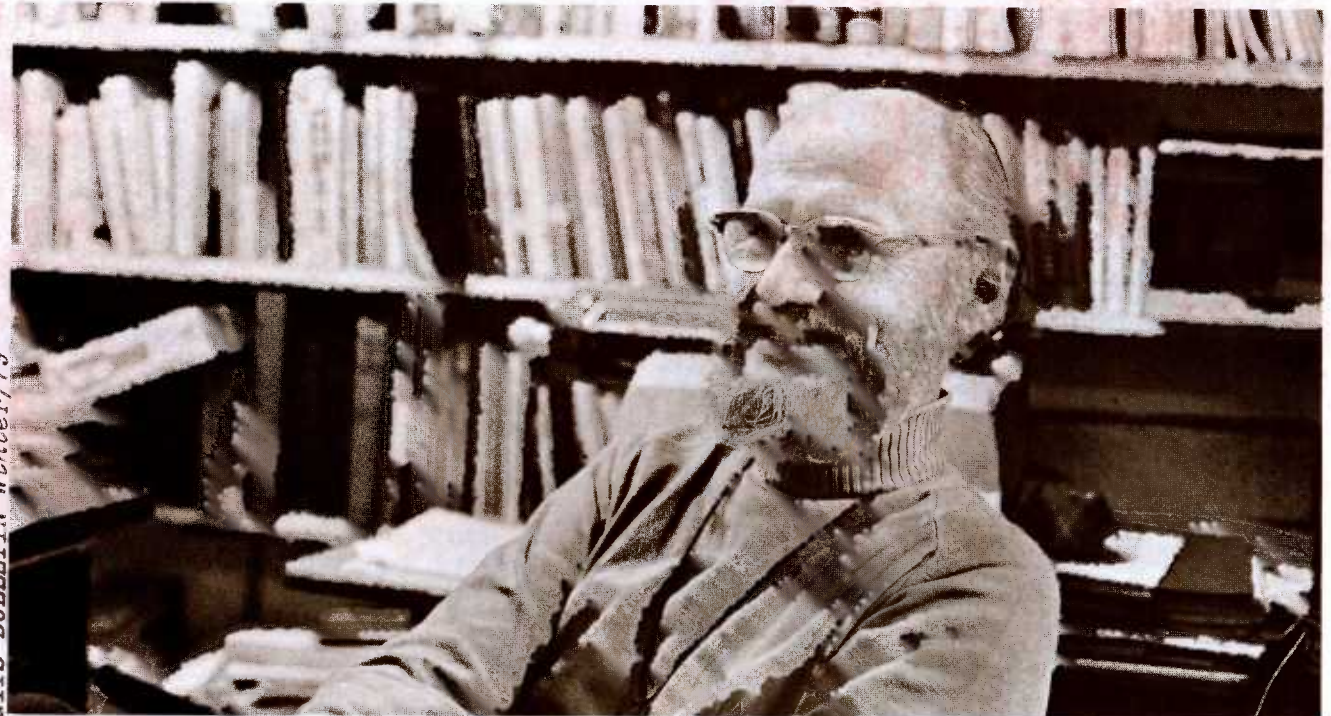
**2. Do the one-third become professional ministers?** Most of them do; but some occupy positions in-between clergy and laity. For example, Sheff and Ann Clarke are tapering off their secular employment as their inner city community, which they began in San Diego, nears self-support through a built-in gasket factory which they also started. Nothing is more exciting about the program than the networks people develop and the places they step out onto — places undreamed of prior to their joining a Midlife Exploration group.

**3. Does the program provide academic credit?** A maximum of ten graduate credits in the Seminary (possibly in partial fulfillment of the Master of Professional Studies degree) is allowed; by arrangement with a college, even college credit can be given. But many of the participants are not interested in academic credit.

**4. How can I find out more about the program?**  
You may phone (212-532-4012) or write the Seminary (5 West 29 Street, New York, NY 10001) for the Midlife Exploration flier. Then, meet with Willis Elliott — maybe over lunch, at his home, or at the Seminary. Also, ask yourself whether you have a friend who needs this and be the bridge between that friend and the program supervisor. (The Seminary tries to close registration for the fall term by the end of April.)

914.238.3386

1978-79 "Midlifers"  
(Photo courtesy of B. Gordon)



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