

**Evangelism Commission
Report to Convention
July, 2005**

Holy God, your Son called us to wrap the whole world in your saving embrace. By your Holy Spirit give us compassion, purpose and energy to invite into your Church those who do not yet know the transforming power of your love. We ask this through Him who has brought us from darkness to light, your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

Diocesan Convention passed a significant resolution last year to begin preparing us for the work of evangelism in Northeast Pennsylvania. Various groups within the Diocese were charged with specific tasks over the last year.

Congregations were asked to:

- *Provide a means to assess the spiritual gifts of every member of the several parishes.*
 - We accomplished this through training on Diocesan Training Day on March 19, 2005 and through material provided in “Groundwork.” Many congregations used the material for their Lenten or Easter study or as the basis for their leadership retreats and training. In addition, the Stewardship Committee has begun work on this area as well.
- *Develop an easily understood purpose statement summarizing their mission.*
 - 41 congregations developed mission statements in seven words or less. These appeared in Diocesan Life, on Bethlehem of PA, and now on the Diocesan Cycle of Prayer.
- *To pray for the work of evangelism.*
 - Congregations pray the above collect at least once a month and the prayer has been a central theme in our Diocesan communications for the last year.

The Evangelism Commission was asked to do the following:

- *Provide to every congregation a tool so that they may annually audit their Sunday morning experience in terms of welcome, accessibility, and clarity for newcomers, and to discuss the results of these audits within the parish so that each parish can maximize its welcome.*
 - We were blessed to have “Groundwork” from the Episcopal Church Office of Communications arrive in our mailboxes just before Lent this past year because many of the things we were charged to do were included in it. The material for an honest self-assessment of our welcome and accessibility was central in that material, along with many other important aspects of our evangelism.
In addition, the Diocesan Training Day had a very successful session on helping congregations understand their own welcome to their community.
- *Create a directory of Evangelism Resources for use by the entire Diocese.*
 - A redesigned Evangelism web-page within the Diocesan web-site was brought on-line on March 9, 2005 after several months of work by the Evangelism Commission members in gathering and annotating resources. The web-page is updated at least monthly and we are now working on an adjacent free-standing web site with our own URL and also considering developing a blog to assist Croutons and other Episcopalians in their own evangelism efforts.

- *Work with Communications and Stewardship Committees to develop common strategies.*
 - We held two joint meetings with these groups plus Congregational Development, the Commission on Ministry along with the Archdeacon and Canon to the Ordinary to develop common strategies. It is our hope that we may continue to meet through the next year, perhaps with a shared meeting or two between these groups to coordinate our work. There is a clear link between stewardship.
- *Develop a detailed plan for how we may move ahead together to spread the gospel in Northeast Pennsylvania.*
 - We have been working hard on this process all year long and we believe we have a realistic, measurable and above practical approach to preparing the diocese for our mission to bring Good News to the people of Northeast Pennsylvania.

In addition:

- *Diocesan Training Day centered on evangelism resources for both laity and clergy.*
 - The Training Day was in our view a success and moved us forward on many areas at once and we thank the Commission on Ministry and diocesan House staff for their work in organizing it.
- *Congregational Development grants were to set a high- priority for mission and the Diocesan Budget narrative is also to be expressed in terms of mission.*
 - We believe that through the grant process, the zero-based budget asked of all areas, and the presentation of that budget we are more and more focusing on being an active mission-minded diocese and using our resources in response to God's call to go into the world proclaiming, baptizing and teaching.

We held a very successful training day for *via Media* an evangelism tool for the Episcopal Church. 27 people, half from the Diocese of Bethlehem, were trained in *via Media* on December 4, 2004, and we now have in the diocese our own trained-trainer, the Rev. Patrick Malloy, whose congregation, Grace, Allentown, has used the program to great effect. Another *via Media* training is planned for the next program year and we hope to be able to sponsor one or two of these a year as we need.

We thank the many people involved in this past year's good work: the members of the Evangelism Commission, the diocesan staff that supported us especially the Rev. Debra Kissinger our liaison, and Bishop Paul Marshall who worked with us throughout the year; The Every Voice Network and the Rev. Patrick Malloy; and the Stewardship, Congregational Development, and Communications Committees and the Commission on Ministry. We are a mostly new committee that has to learn much along the way.

We have attached our plan to prepare the Diocese to evangelize Northeast Pennsylvania. With the support of the people of the Diocese, through Convention, with God's help we hope to bring about the transformation of our mission and ministry of our diocese.

We do not expect a quick "fix." Most solid evangelism efforts are preceded by many years of hard work, study, exploration and, most of all, prayer. In some places our work will not take hold, in others it will flourish. We only sow and tend, it is God who gives the growth. With your prayers, and every expectation that God will do miraculous things in our midst, we know that we will be blessed to share the Gospel of Christ to everyone in our region.

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev. Andrew T. Gerns, Trinity, Easton, Chair

Members of the Evangelism Commission, 2004-05:

Dr. Scott Bader-Saye, Epiphany, Clark's Summit

The Rev. Jane Bender, St. Anne's, Trexlertown

Dan Charney, Trinity, Easton

The Rev. Canon Ginny Rex Day , Trinity, Mt. Pocono

The Rev. Cynthia Guthkelch, St. Peter's, Tunkhannock

The Rev. Geoff Howson, Grace Church, Kingston

Virginia Knapp, St. Barnabas, Kutztown

Meg VanVelsor, Christ Church, Reading

Robin Yedlock, Grace, Kingston