

Evangelism Commission Report

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.*

We continue to follow the direction of Diocesan Convention in assisting and leading the diocese in the work of evangelism in Northeast Pennsylvania. Last year, a second omnibus resolution on evangelism was passed in which were directed to do the following:

Congregations were asked to:

- *Identify two or more lay leaders gifted in hospitality and witness to work with their clergy in leading their parishes to become a greater presence and witness in their communities.*
- *These evangelists were to take part in regional training events in the diocese.*
 - *37 parishes in the diocese identified 84 people to serve as evangelists in their communities and to assist their clergy and lay leadership in developing evangelism programs or projects in their congregations.*
- *Take part in the study of evangelism using a variety of resources including these identified evangelists.*
 - *Many congregations utilized Groundwork and Groundwork II developed by the office of communications of the Episcopal Church and other resources such as Via Media to further their study and work of evangelism.*
- *To pray for the work of evangelism.*
 - *Congregations pray the above collect at least once a month and the prayer has continued to be a theme in our ongoing Diocesan communications for the last year.*

The Evangelism Commission was directed to do the following:

- *To begin the implementation of a Plan to Evangelize Northeast Pennsylvania as presented at last year's convention.*
- *To hold regional evangelism training sessions for the lay persons identified by their parishes above. We held nine training sessions for 37 parishes, training 84 people during Eastertide, 2006. The following parishes took part in training session at these locations:*

Church	Training Site	Number
	CHRIST CHURCH, READING –	
ST THOMAS, MORGANTOWN	4/22	1
ST LUKE'S, LEBANON		2
ST MARY'S, READING		2
ST ALBAN'S, SINKING SPRING		2
CHRIST CHURCH, READING		2
ST BRIGID'S, NAZARETH	TRINITY, MT POCONO - April 29	2
TRINITY, MT POCONO		6
	ST PETER'S, TUNKHANNOCK – 4/	
PRINCE OF PEACE, DALLAS	29	3
ST PAUL'S, MONTROSE		2
ST PETER'S, TUNKHANNOCK		1
GRACE, KINGSTON	GRACE, KINGSTON - May 6	6
TRINITY, WEST PITTSTON		3
ST CLEMENT'S & ST. PETER'S		1
ST STEPHEN'S PRO		2

CATHEDRAL		
CHRIST CHURCH, TOWANDA	CHRIST CHURCH, TOWANDA - May 6	3
ST PAUL'S, TROY		2
REDEEMER, SAYRE		1
TRINITY, ATHENS		2
NORTH PARISH, FRACKVILLE	TRINITY, POTTSVILLE - May 6	2
ST JAMES', SCHUYLKILL		
HAVEN		2
TRINITY, POTTSVILLE		4
CALVARY, TAMAQUA		1
GOOD SHEPHERD, MILFORD	ST JOHN'S, HAMLIN - May 20	2
CHRIST CHURCH, INDIAN		
ORCHARD		2
GRACE CHURCH, HONESDALE		2
GOOD SHEPHERD, SCRANTON		2
ST MARK'S, MOSCOW		1
ST JOHN'S, HAMLIN		2
ST GEORGE, HELLERTOWN	ST STEPHEN'S, WHITEHALL - May 20	2
ST STEPHEN'S, WHITEHALL		2
GRACE, ALLENTOWN		2
ST ANNE'S, TREXLERTOWN		2
ST JOHN'S, PALMERTON		2
MEDIATOR, ALLENTOWN		2
TRINITY, EASTON		6
ST ELIZABETH'S, SCHNECKSVILLE		1
37		84

The regional evangelism training were led by members of the Commission. While we received training and support from the Rev. Roy Tripp and Ms. Kay Keenan from *Grow Your Church Now* (who also came up from the Diocese of Delaware to present at clergy day), the actual design and training were done by members of the Commission. These trainers will stay in touch with and support the congregations they trained through the next round of training.

We especially thank the parishes that agreed to host regional evangelism trainings. We tried to be creative in finding sites for these events so some of these churches were new to hosting a diocesan event. We are grateful for their enthusiasm which made our goal of bringing quality training as close to as many congregations as we could a reality. As a Commission, we are committed to this approach of regional training, with home-grown talent utilizing at times the help of a person or group trained in a particular area. We still do some diocesan wide events, but we believe that, on balance, as much as we can do to make our resources accessible builds up the whole diocese.

We realized that this first round of trainings were for many an introduction to evangelism. This next year we will focus more strongly on the role of hospitality and welcome in the local parish. To that end, we will be using the book *Fireweed Evangelism* by the Rev. Canon Elizabeth Geitz as the basis for our second round of regional training events.

The real work of evangelism, of course, is not found in committee work but in the actual work of ordinary Christians who are a part of congregations, and who live lives of faithfulness and service to Christ in the world. So the real work of evangelism will be lived out by every baptized member in every congregation.

That is why every parish that took part in a regional training is required to come up with at least two evangelism projects and complete them before Easter, 2007. Our display area in the Convention shows off many of those projects. Some projects are small, such as new signage or an improved brochure. Some of the projects are more ambitious such as direct mail campaigns and more. The beauty of our style of training is that each congregation will do as much evangelism as their size and context make them ready to do. We know that this process, while slow—and not a magic bullet—will show amazing fruit for each parish in surprising ways. We are very grateful for their hard work and enthusiasm.

In addition, we have accomplished these other tasks this year:

- *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.
- The Convention directed *the Evangelism Commission in concert with other Diocesan Committees and local congregations to create innovative gatherings around the Diocese as a way to foster conversation with people outside the church and to bear witness to the Good News.* In addition, at the last convention, we pledged Diocesan and local support to those communities as they emerge.
 - As of this writing, the Evangelism Commission is planning a September 16th Learning Party to learn about Emerging Churches, their background and effectiveness. We are bringing the Rev. Karen Ward, Pastor, and a team from the Church of the Apostles, an emerging community in Seattle, Washington, associated with both the ELCA, the Episcopal Church. The team will train and share with about 25 people from the Episcopal Church and other traditions in NE Pennsylvania some of the ins-and-outs of a church without walls, using new media and combinations of reimagined and ancient forms of worship in a new kind of community for mission.
 - While the Evangelism Commission can claim no credit whatsoever for the work and mission of the Peacemeal Community, we hold them up to the Diocese as an example of the ways we can reach beyond our walls to people who are drawn to Christianity but in forms that exist alongside our traditional models of parish life.

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 Ms. Barbara Lewis who handled the nuts and bolts of the registration, coordination with the host parishes and worked with the trainers for the regional evangelism workshops. The Rev. Debra Kissinger was our staff liaison, and Bishop Paul Marshall who continues to work closely with us. Again, we enjoyed working alongside the Stewardship, Congregational Development, and Communications Committees and the Commission on Ministry whenever we could.

Our little committee has come to use the image of "popcorn" to describe how we work and pray and imagine together. Ideas often pop up and bounce around the room like popcorn in a popping machine. We are still learning evangelism as we go, but our passion for the Gospel and for sharing it with everyone who does not know the loving embrace of Jesus still grows.

We believe that Evangelism is both a calling and a gift. We share the gift that we have been given: new and abundant life in Christ Jesus. We believe that evangelism grows out of our passion for the Gospel. Evangelism is a mark of spiritual maturity and animated by the Holy Spirit. We have found that while we

may use the tools of marketing and communications, the real message is found in the welcome and hospitality as well as the witness and proclamation of both our individual disciples and our communities.

Evangelism is a gift and a calling and therefore requires the cultivation of skill, a mindset and a deep conviction that we are sharing Jesus Christ himself to a broken, aching world that needs to hear and know and respond to God's love, power and grace. When we share that gift, we do not know where it will take us. Our call is to proclaim, baptize and teach. We give the final outcomes to God.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Members of the Evangelism Commission, 2005-06:

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

The Rev. Jane Bender

Dan Charney, Trinity, Easton

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

The Rev. John Francis, Christ Church, Reading

Virginia Knapp, St. Elizabeth, Schnecksville

The Rev. Bill McGinty, Good Shepherd & St. John, New Milford

Beth Vorosmarti, Cathedral Church of the Nativity, Bethlehem

The Rev. Terry Wible, St. Luke's, Lebanon

Robin Yedlock, Grace, Kingston