

# 29 Congregations take part in regional Evangelism Workshops so far

By Andrew Gerns

*Evangelism is sharing the gift we have been given – new life in Jesus Christ. Evangelism is our call and commission directly from our Lord. It reflects our spiritual maturity and our confidence in our faith. Evangelism is also a skill to be learned and carried out in community. For the next two years, the Diocese of Bethlehem will train and encourage members of our parishes to proclaim the love of God in Christ Jesus and to effectively welcome those we invite into our congregations so that they may share the joy we know as Jesus' friends and apprentices.*

Regional evangelism workshops are taking places around the diocese right now during Eastertide. Four of ten scheduled workshops have taken place, with six to go. Part of a detailed plan for evangelizing Northeast Pennsylvania that was passed at Diocesan Convention in October 2005, the free training workshops are being led by members of the Evangelism Commission in ten parishes around the diocese on Saturdays during Eastertide.

Convention directed that every parish choose at least two lay people to serve as evangelists for each parish in our Diocese. They would attend two regional training workshops, one in Eastertide 2006, the second in Eastertide 2007. The workshops reflect the fundamental pattern of evangelism which is to welcome/invite people into our parishes and for Christians to be sent into their communities to witness to the Gospel. Parishes will pair up to help each other in specific aspects of their evangelism. The evangelism projects are developed by each parish's evangelists according to the needs of their congregation.

Projects may be as simple as improving a parish's answering machine message and yellow page ads, as important as improving their welcome of newcomers and their retention of new members, or congregations may work on advertising, direct mail or their website. How many projects, their depth and their reach are up to each parish's evangelists and leadership.

So far 29 of the 66 parishes have responded by sending evangelists to regional workshops. Some parishes

have sent two people, some send three and a few have sent as many as six.

The first round of workshops now underway emphasize each parish's invitation, welcome and inclusion of new members of the parish. Also covered is how parishes can increase their community's awareness of the parish community and their ministry.

Every congregation that attends the workshop will be asked to develop at least two evangelism projects for their parish, to be completed by Easter, 2007. Laity from each church will not necessarily do the project so much as work with the clergy and lay leadership to accomplish the project.

Attendees will look at *Percept*, attendance and stewardship data available at [www.episcopalchurch.org/growth\\_60791\\_ENG\\_HTML.htm](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/growth_60791_ENG_HTML.htm) and discuss how their congregations are living out the mission statements developed in 2005.

Ten parishes have taken part in regional workshops to date that have taken place at Christ Church, Reading, St. Peter's, Tunkhannock and Trinity, Mount Pocono. (The workshop scheduled for St. George's, Hellertown was cancelled because no parishes signed up for that day).

The parishes that took part in these workshops were: St. Thomas, Morgantown; St. Luke's, Lebanon; St. Mary's, Reading; St. Alban's, Sinking Spring; Christ Church, Reading, St. Brigid's, Nazareth; Trinity, Mt. Pocono, Prince of Peace, Dallas, St. Paul's, Montrose and St. Peter's, Tunkhannock.

Six workshops are scheduled for

the remainder of Eastertide. So far, 19 parishes have signed up.

On May 6, workshops will take place in Towanda, Pottsville and Kingston.

Congregations that have signed up for that day in Towanda include: St. Paul's, Troy; Redeemer, Sayre; Christ Church, Towanda; Trinity, Athens. For Pottsville: Calvary, Tamaqua; St. James, Schuylkill Haven; Trinity, Pottsville. For Kingston: Grace, Kingston; Trinity, West Pittston; Holy Cross, Wilkes-Barre; St. Clement & St. Peter's, Wilkes-Barre; St. Stephen's Pro-Cathedral, Wilkes-Barre. Registration for these workshop is closed.

There will be workshops on May 13 at St. Peter's, Hazelton and on May 20 at St. Stephen's, Whitehall and St. John's in Hamlin.

So far, St. Stephen's, Whitehall; Grace, Allentown; St. Anne's, Trexlertown; St. John's, Palmerton; St. George's, Hellertown; Mediator, Allentown; and Trinity, Easton have registered for the Whitehall workshop.

Trainers are Scott Bader-Saye, The Rev. Bill McGinty, Virginia Knapp, Beth Verosmarti, The Rev. Ginny Rex Day, The Rev. Terry Wible, Robin Yedlock, Dan Charney, and The Rev. Andrew Gerns.

There is still time to sign up for these practical, quality trainings. There is practical help close by to help each parish give the gift they have been given. The Evangelism Commission has designed these to be as close to as many churches as possible. The workshops are free and lunch is provided. Each Saturday workshop is scheduled to last from 10 am to 2 pm. To register, use the form at [www.diobeth.typepad.com/diobeth\\_newspin/files/060214\\_regional\\_trng.pdf](http://www.diobeth.typepad.com/diobeth_newspin/files/060214_regional_trng.pdf), or contact Barbara Lewis at diocesan house at [barblewis@diobeth.org](mailto:barblewis@diobeth.org).

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