

Regional Evangelism Training Workshops

By Andrew Gerns

Ash Wednesday, 2006

Dear Friends in Christ,

Last October, when we gathered in Diocesan Convention, we voted to continue to do significant work in evangelism. We asked every congregation to take part in this important work and the time has come for you to share in our common mission.

The heart of this work is focused on having every congregation in the diocese choose two lay people to serve your congregation as evangelists and to hold regional trainings in evangelism for those people.

Our vision is that every congregation will have two people who will work with the lay and ordained leadership in each parish, and that together each congregation will undertake at least two evangelism projects between Eastertide 2006 and Easter Sunday 2007.

At Diocesan Convention, we began to gather from congregations the names of their evangelists and we have now set up ten regional trainings. Please see the sidebar.

Enclosed with this letter, as sent to congregations was a form to be returned, indicating *who* your evangelists will be and *which* local evangelism training they would like to attend. We asked people to prioritize their choices for training sites, so we can be sure that they are as evenly attended as possible. (Forms are available also at [www.diobeth.typepad.com/diobeth_newspin.](http://www.diobeth.typepad.com/diobeth_newspin/))

We would like the evangelists from each parish to be laity. They should know that they will be in this role for at least two years, since they will take part in two

Each congregation should have a copy of the following. If not, contact Father Gerns, father_andy@trintyeaston.org.

- *A Shy Person's Guide to the Practice of Evangelism* is a simply written, pocket sized introduction to the practice of evangelism developed by the Diocese of Massachusetts.
- *Reclaiming the Great Commission* is a book written by Bishop Claude Payne and Hamilton Beazley. This book, written in 2001, describes a practical model for transforming congregations into dynamic, mission-oriented communities.

Other Resources to Consider

- *Via Media* is an introduction to the Christian faith developed by the Every Voice Network. Each session is based on an introductory video followed by a discussion.
- *The Discovery Series* is a video based introduction to the Episcopal Church. It can be used as newcomer orientation, pre-baptismal instruction, confirmation or inquirers class. Published by the Diocese of Texas.

A list of practical resources as well as some engaging and provocative writing, web sites and blogs on how we as Christians invite people into our churches and how we go into the world proclaiming Jesus is available at www.diobeth.typepad.com/diobeth_newspin and www.diobeth.org/Ministries/evangelism.html.

trainings: one in Eastertide, 2006 and one in Eastertide, 2007.

All training sessions are on Saturdays from 10 am to 2 pm. We have asked host congregations to provide coffee and tea, and each participant to bring their own lunch.

A congregation may send more than two people. In that event, please use an additional form. However many, our hope is that these folks will work with vestries, lay leadership and clergy in developing evangelism projects that fit each congregation's situation.

Even though we are asking every parish to do two evangelism projects, we hope that members will be empowered to do more as the year progresses.

Finally, we are also asking if your congregation is using "Groundwork II" this Lent or some other time as a tool for your evangelism and growth.

Episcopalians have a reputation for being reticent, even "shy" evangelists. Our hope is that these regional trainings will help us learn to become more inviting, more welcoming people who are inviting people into a relationship with God in Christ that will change them.

At times, we Episcopalians also forget why we are called to evangelize. We look around and worry about the future of our congregations so we are tempted to sign on for the next quick fix, whatever that is. The truth is that people do not come into Christian community to keep churches open. They come to meet Jesus.

We are sharing a gift. We are sharing what we have been given: new life in Christ Jesus. God knows, and will bless,

Registration forms have been sent to parishes. They may also be downloaded at www.diobeth.typepad.com/diobeth_newspin/

April 22: Christ Church, Reading
April 22: St. George's, Hellertown
April 29: Trinity Church, Mt. Pocono
April 29: St. Peter's, Tunkhannock
May 6: Trinity Church, Pottsville
May 6: Grace Church, Kingston
May 6: Christ Church, Towanda
May 13: St. Peter's, Hazleton
May 20: St. Stephen's, Whitehall
May 20: St. John's Church, Hamlin

All from 10:00 to 2:00

where that sharing will take us.

[Registration forms have been sent to parishes. They may also be downloaded at www.diobeth.typepad.com/diobeth_newspin. Please return completed forms.]

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at Trinity Episcopal Church, Easton, 610-253-0792, or at fr.andy@trintyeaston.org. Thank you in advance for your ministry and may God bless us as we proclaim Christ's love to a hungry, seeking people.

The Rev. Andrew T. Gerns, rector of Trinity Church, Easton, is chair of the diocesan Evangelism Commission.