

OPEN LETTER TO THE SKYLANDS EMMAUS COMMUNITY

FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

As you know we recently had to cancel both the men's and women's Spring Walks because of low registrations (3 men registrations and 0 women registrations). We also had great difficulty filling all of the positions on each team.

We want to share with you some important information:

- **Some of the reasons why the Board thinks we are having increasing difficulty with obtaining sufficient registration and filling out teams**
- **What we are planning to do to improve our Community**
- **Seek your assistance with this re-building process**

Reasons for the Problem

First, this problem of low pilgrim registrations and the increasing difficulty in forming teams is not new. Over the last 5 years and some 20 Walks it has been steadily becoming more acute. *Pease see the table below which shows the number of pilgrims for each Walk over the past 5 years.* The Men have averaged 12.4 pilgrims per Walk; the Women have done better at 19.5 pilgrims per Walk. But notice that over the most recent Walks the pilgrim count has been decreasing.

As you may know the International Emmaus office strongly recommends having a minimum of 20 pilgrims to conduct a Walk. The reason is that we know historically that about 1 of 4 pilgrims stay active in Emmaus and subsequently serve on teams. So if we have a smaller pool of pilgrims over time then we won't have enough new people to serve on teams. As a consequence, we go back over and over again to the people who have served previously and we simply burn them out. The Emmaus recommendation is that each team have 1/3 new pilgrims. We have not been able to do that because we haven't had a sufficient pool of new pilgrims to draw from.

Some have argued that even if we don't have 20 pilgrims, the pilgrims who do go on the Walk often have life changing experiences and therefore the Walk is valuable even if there are less than 20 pilgrims. That's true, but in the long run, if that continues to happen, as is the case with our Community, we begin to cancel Walks and even die as a Community, which obviously means that we might be denying those future pilgrims of a life-changing experience.

Now we truly know how difficult it will be in northern New Jersey to obtain 20 pilgrims for each Walk. But clearly as the table below shows it is not impossible and we certainly must strive for it, if frankly we are going to survive and grow as a Community.

There are others reasons for this decline in the number of registered pilgrims and the increasing difficulty in forming teams. Here are some additional reasons:

- Some Reunion Groups, which should be the source of Sponsorships, have faltered and lost membership
- Inadequate communication with the Community about upcoming events
- We have lost some of our Community Champions because of retirement and moving out of New Jersey
- We need more Community Development with both our larger churches and with churches we've had no pilgrims from

What are We Doing to Improve?

First, we have committed ourselves as a Board to ending our denial about the problem and praying intensely for the guidance of the Holy Spirit

Second, we have obtained the principal consultant from the international Emmaus Community to work with the Board and the Community.

There will be a Community meeting with the consultant on Saturday, May 12th from 1:30 to 6:00 pm at Chatham UMC. This will afford community members the opportunity to ask questions of the consultant and to learn more about the revised model for the Walks to Emmaus. Please try to attend this important meeting.

Third, we are immediately conducting a special Community Training Day on Saturday, June 9th at Frankford Plains UMC before and after our Community Picnic from 10 am to 2 pm in all aspects of the NEW Emmaus manual and model. Please try to attend this important meeting.

Rev. Gabrielle Martone is our Community Trainer. If you would like to assist her as a trainer please contact her at 201-410-6518 or at pastorgabriellemartone@gmail.com

Fourth, we will be forming improvement teams for our Reunion Groups and Community Development and Outreach.

Rev. Vicki Brendler is leading our Community Development team. If you would like to assist her on this team please contact her at 908-642-1064 or at vmbrendler@gmail.com

Rev. Dawn Maffetone is leading our Reunion Development team. If you would like to assist her on this team please contact her 201-841-3090 or at pastor.dawn.maffetone@gmail.com

Fifth, we are publishing a detailed Calendar of Skylands Emmaus Events so the Community knows what's happening and can plan to participate more fully. **This calendar is attached** and is on our website [at www.myswte.org](http://www.myswte.org).

Sixth, we are proceeding with the Fall Men’s and Women’s Walks at Sacred Heart on Oct. 18-21 and Oct. 25-28 respectively. The Team Selection Committee, under the direction of Ann Spear, will be meeting shortly to form the teams and to train the team leaders. If you would like to serve on these teams please fill out the attached form and send to Anne Spear at raggedyanne7@yahoo.com.

IMPORTANT: THE BOARD HAS ESTABLISHED AN ABSOLUTE DEADLINE OF SEPTEMBER 15TH FOR PILGRIM APPLICATIONS FOR BOTH WALKS. ANY APPLICATION RECEIVED AFTER THIS DATE WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED FOR THESE FALL WALKS. THE BOARD HAS SET A GOAL OF 20 PILGRIMS FOR EACH WALK. PLEASE, PLEASE REGISTER PILGRIMS NOW. THERE WILL BE NO EXTENSION OF THIS DEADLINE. IF WE CANCEL A WALK WE WILL LOSE A \$1,000 DEPOSIT FOR THAT WALK.

How Can You Help?

First, please be in prayer for our Community and the Board as we go through this re-building process

Second, we are inviting you on these improvement teams. We understand that the Board is accountable for the plan and direction of the Community, but we need your expert assistance

Third, we need your counsel. Please do not hesitate to contact us with ideas, concerns, and questions

Fourth, we need you to sponsor and encourage other church members to sponsor appropriate candidates for future Walks. *It is especially important that we achieve sufficient numbers of pilgrims for the October Walks. Cancelling additional Walks will have a debilitating effect on the entire Community.* **PLEASE NOTE THAT IF WE HAVE TO CANCEL EITHER OF THE FALL WALKS WE WILL LOSE A \$1,000 DEPOSIT FOR THAT WALK. PLEASE SPONSOR NOW!**

SKYLANDS WALK TO EMMAUS

NUMBER OF PILGRIMS PER WALK OVER PAST 5 YEARS

WALK NO.	MEN PILGRIMS	WOMEN PILGRIMS	TOTAL
47	10	11	21
46	9	21	30
45	8	19	27
44	13	18	31
43	17	15	32
42	12	24	36
41	11	22	33
40	10	22	32

	39	23	24	47
	38	11	19	30
TOTAL		124	195	319
AVERAGE		12.4	19.5	31.9
25% YIELD		3.1	4.9	8

Thank you for your commitment to the Skylands Community.

Jack Scharf, Community Lay Director
 Rev. Wayne Jones, community Spiritual Director
 Dawn Chase, Assistant Community Lay Director
 Greselda Powell, Treasurer
 Al Arroyo, Secretary
 Kathy Altobello, Community Agape
 Ruth Ann Brandt, Gatherings and 4th Day
 Rev. Vicki Brendler, Community Development
 Tom Kitson, International Agape
 Rev. Dawn Maffetone, Reunion Groups
 Rev. Gabrielle Martone, Community Trainer
 Rose Parnell, Music
 Sam Perez, Facility Management
 Sue Puma, Website
 Anne Spear, Team Selection
 Craig Spear, Assistant Community Spiritual Director