

Report on the Annual Council of the Diocese of Virginia

The 218th Annual Council of the Diocese of Virginia met January 26 -28, 2013, at the Regency Hyatt in Reston, Va. Approximately 500 clergy, lay delegates, and guests were present. Grace and Holy Trinity Church was represented by the Rev. Bo Millner, the Rev. Michael Cadaret, Shelli Lord, Dawn McNamara, and Sara Jo Williams. Also present from Grace and Holy Trinity were Buddy Williams who served as a teller and Brad Davenport, chief judge for the council.

The first morning session dealt with business of the diocese: reports from various commissions and committees and a review of the budget. All reflected the impressive work that is being done in the Diocese of Virginia. The following were elected to the Standing Committee: Ali Getlein, St. Andrew's, Richmond; Steve Van Voorhees, Holy Comforter, Richmond; the Rev. Kim Coleman, Trinity Church, Arlington; and the Rev. Lin Hutton, St. Thomas, Orange.

The theme of this year's council was "Setting God's Table." The Rt. Rev. Susan E. Goff, Suffragan Bishop, gave the three meditations during the two days and delivered the sermon at Holy Eucharist Friday afternoon. In all four times she spoke of our being given bread and wine at the table of God and are thus sent forth into the world to be the hands, eyes, and feet of God in giving to others.

The keynote speaker both days was Dr. Clif Christopher, an ordained Methodist minister who is founder and CEO of Horizon Stewardship Company and author of NOT MY PARENTS' OFFERING PLATE. A very engaging speaker, he presented ideas about giving to the church. He challenged us to make our case why we as a church are more worthy to receive monetary gifts than other "charities." There are more than eight million charities or non-profits in the world; why should one give more to one of those than to the church?

In Bishop Shannon Johnston's keynote address he stressed the importance of those of opposite opinions walking in the grace of God. Using Simon and Matthew as examples, he talked of the importance of listening to one another and being together in Christian unity.

In their addresses, Bishop Goff spoke of the successful return to their church of those who have been displaced during the dispute of properties. Bishop Gullick celebrated the successes of 50 years of Shrine Mont camps. As he said, "Seeds of faith sewn come back 100 fold."

Saturday afternoon workshops dealt with topics of current interests: Serving Those Who Have Served, Empowering Laity for Pastoral Care, and The Face of Gun Violence in Virginia.

Saturday morning was spent in reviewing resolutions presented. Brad Davenport presented a courtesy resolution thanking Henry D. W. Burt for his years of faithful service to the Diocese.

Much discussion was held on the addressing of gun violence in our nation. Two resolutions were passed. For the exact wording of these two, please check the Diocesan website at:

<http://www.thediocese.net/Governance/Council/2013/Resolution-Results/>

A most glorious moment of council was when the church St. Peter's in the Woods reached church status and was welcomed into the Diocese. Approximately 120 members of that parish marched proudly into the hall to be officially welcomed.

The final hymn of the 218th Council was "Go Forth for God: Go into the World in Peace." We were reminded of the important work being done within our diocese and challenged to continue that work. The third stanza seemed a most appropriate ending to our three days:

Go forth for God; go to the world in strength;
Hold fast the good, be urgent for the right;
Render to no one evil; Christ at length
Shall overcome all darkness with his light.