

Report from the 217th Annual Council of the Diocese of Virginia January 26-28, 2012

The theme of this year's council was Serving Christ: Spirit, Mind and Body. After the morning gathering song, "Awake, Awake to Love and Work" we set about the task of hearing reports and learning about the many gifts we have been given and how we are using these gifts. The Right Rev. Jane Holmes Dixon served as leader for our three meditations. She encouraged us to look at the many strengths we have, being a large diocese, and focus on what we have instead of what more we think we need.

Bishop Johnston's Pastoral Address focused on what our 182 congregations (that's @82,000 members) can do with "resources of wisdom and experience." Fifty nine persons are currently in the process of serving God through ordained ministry. Through our numerous domestic and foreign mission trips, the Diocese of Virginia is reaching farther and farther into the world.

There was also discussion of the court case involving the church properties the Diocese seeks to have returned to us and the continuing congregations that are currently meeting at other locations until the matter is resolved. The Virginia courts have issued a ruling in favor of the Diocese and process of final resolution is still ongoing . Bishop Johnston announced the "Dayspring Program" which will focus on the "ministry, mission and administration" of those congregations as their future unfolds. Bishop Johnston will lead the "Dayspring Program" himself and there will be three sub-groups to include Vision, Resources, and Messaging. The first group will discern the way forward, the second will find the financial resources to make it work and the third will communicate the work being done and how to support it. At the conclusion of Council on Saturday morning, it should be noted that our very own Brad Davenport received a standing ovation for his work and dedication to this court case.

The Right Reverend E.F. "Ted" Gulick, Assistant Bishop, described the deep and far reaching impact of our conference centers- Shrine Mont and Roslyn. For generations they have been sources of deep spiritual growth and with our care and continued support, this will continue in the future.

The service of Holy Eucharist and Service of Leave Taking for the Rt. Rev. David C. Jones was a highlight of the Council. At the conclusion of the service Bishop Jones officially retired as Bishop Suffragan. The evening concluded with a special dinner, reminiscing, unveiling of his portrait to hang at The Mayo House, and a dance in honor of Bishop Jones and his wife, Kay.

The Council adopted a 2012 budget of \$4,831,383.00. The Committee on Constitution and Canons passed the following changes which were passed by Council; the addition of a youth delegate (participating in campus ministry) as part of the Executive Board, the ability of the Executive Board to elect a Lay member at its Vice President and appoint a secretary who need not be a member of the Executive Board. Also, a change was suggested and adopted which allows for five representatives from our Diocesan Campus Ministry to have seat, voice and vote at Council. Currently there are two while we have five Campus Ministries. Courtesy resolutions were passed remembering and giving thanks for the ministries of 14 persons whose faith, love, and devotion have strengthened the Diocese of Virginia.

Shelli Lord, Sara Jo Williams, Meredith Maple, and I are thankful for the opportunity to represent GHTC at Annual Council. If you have any questions, or would like anymore information please feel free to ask or go to the Diocese of Virginia website (www.thediocese.net) .