

-Report on the 118th Annual Council of the Diocese of Southern Virginia- Held February 12-14' in Williamsburg - by John Hadfield, Delegate to Council

The trip started out well. We left home by 3 PM that afternoon for the expected 45 minute drive to Williamsburg and by 5 o'clock we were almost there after taking over an hour just to clear the Hampton Roads Tunnel. A cold dreary day, Friday February 12th was the opening day for the 118th Annual Council held again at the Williamsburg Lodge. We had looked forward to seeing old friends and to making new friends. We had been excited as we had left home only to have our enthusiasm cooled by the exceptionally challenging traffic. Virginia's General Assembly can't seem to get it right!

As 5:30 came we entered the dining room at the Lodge to our awaiting table and the rest of the All Saints' delegation to council. Stan, Segar, Peggy, Dave Howell, Caryl Felty along with assorted spouses had all begun partaking of the buffet as we made our way in. Finally relaxing, we enjoyed the conversation and company as we began talking about the agenda and expected events of the weekend. John Kearly, the 4th delegate, had been called away at the last minute; we missed him and June and look forward to other times when we can benefit from their company.

Friday evening's council program began at 7PM with some preliminary housekeeping matters including such mundane activities as determining that a quorum was present, granting seat and voice (but not vote) to a number of additional people and approving the Bishop's nominations for various committees. In addition, we were treated to the Bishop's address, the first for our new bishop. This is somewhat akin to a "State of the Diocese" address expanded upon by whatever else the bishop feels is important to tell the diocese. This year, Bishop Hollerinth talked about the state of the budget and especially how our giving to the National Church had declined to an embarrassingly low level. Less than 5% of the 2010 budget will go to the National Church; the bishop asked that we increase that giving over the next 5 years to be a tithe or 10% of the annual budget. On Saturday, we elected several people for various offices. The nominees names had been printed in the Jamestown Cross; the election results will be printed in the next issue.

As always, Council consists of a "legislative" component and an information portion where the delegates are provided reports from the various activities of the diocese. Those included reports from the Camp Chanco committee, the Episcopal Church Women and an Ad Hoc committee evaluating the condition of the Talbot Hall property (Diocesan headquarters). That committee will eventually make a recommendation on what should be done with the property; deferred maintenance over the years has left the facilities there in terrible condition, now estimated to cost over one million dollars to repair and refurbish. We were advised that a more complete report should be forthcoming in a few months. On the legislative side, council adopted the annual budget for the diocese totaling \$2,033,338, then considered several resolutions, all of which had been printed in the Jamestown Cross in the most recent edition.

There were two Constitutional Resolutions, the first dealing with the composition of council passed. The second, dealing with the election of bishops was tabled until the Ecumenical Commission has had a chance for a review. All Constitutional changes require adoption at two successive councils in order to pass, so the first resolution would have to be approved next year to become adopted. There were 4 resolutions to make changes to the Diocesan Canons. Of these, only C-3 and C-4 were adopted. These deal with the status of parishes and missions. C-3 describes the responsibilities of parishes with respect to their relationship to the diocese and the other parishes within the diocese, while C-4, after some amendment at council, would make clear that any church which became a Mission Station due to its failure to live up to its responsibilities, would lose the right to vote at Council. There were also 2 general resolutions considered and adopted. These general resolutions do not change the canons of the diocese but they do provide all of us with the "sense of council", act as moral guides for the church, and

also provide guidance to the bishop and the Executive Board as to the actions that the council would like to see done.

Somewhat unusual for council was the presence of a guest speaker, Phyllis Tickle. An author, educator and dynamic speaker, she made two nearly hour long presentation on Saturday then gave the sermon on Sunday at the closing service. Her talks were based largely on her book The Great Emergence, How Christianity is Changing and Why. Funny, full of life, witty and engaging, Phyllis Tickle's quick delivery left some of us behind as we raced to keep up with her portrayal of life in these changing times.

She described to us how, in roughly five hundred year cycles, Christianity goes through major and very tumultuous changes. She took us through the Reformation, about 500 years ago, the Great Schism, about 1000 years ago, the fall of Rome and the advent of the monastic orders, about 1500 years ago, and of course, the birth of Christ, about 2000 years ago. While focusing on the upheavals of Christianity, she also pointed out that these cataclysmic changes are societal-wide, affecting virtually every part of our lives. Although there seem to be single events that mark these periods, she described how the changes really take many years to unfold. The current "great emergence" has been underway since the middle of the 19th century, as she described it with the advent of electricity, Albert Schweitzer's book In Search of the Historical Jesus, and the women's suffrage movement of the early 20th century, among a great many events she recalled for us.

Due in part to these very thought provoking presentations, council did not adjourn until just after 5 PM on Saturday. The closing service on Sunday gave us the final chapter in Phyllis Tickle's presentations, ending the 118th Annual Council on the sunniest day of the weekend, a hopeful harbinger of a bright future for the Diocese of Southern Virginia.



Segar, Stan and Peggy at the 118th Annual Council