

## 225<sup>th</sup> Diocesan Convention

The Rev. Marek Zabriskie and our lay deputies, Lyn Simensen and John Kepner, attended the Annual Diocesan Convention on November 8, 2008. Bishop Bartlett presided. Highlights of the Convention follow:

- The Convention began with Eucharist and a Homily by The Rt. Rev. Robert W. Ilhoff, former Bishop of Maryland. A video message of encouragement from the Presiding Bishop followed. After organizational business matters, the morning session ended with breakout sessions during which attendees were given a chance for dialogue on three questions: i) what are we personally feeling about the affairs of the Diocese in light of the painful events of the past several years involving Bishop Bennison; ii) what steps can we take together going forward to position the Diocese for a healthy future; and iii) what can each of us do personally in that regard. The discussion of our breakout group was positive and hopeful.
- The 2009 Diocesan Program Budget passed with virtually unanimous support. It is a "bare bones", balanced budget. However, estimated investment income from the Diocesan endowment funds for 2009 is likely to be adversely affected by the recent financial crisis, and this may require expense cutbacks beyond those reflected in the approved Budget.
- A resolution to sell the Wapiti camp and conference center property passed by a narrow margin (51% voting in favor, 49% against). An appraisal just received indicates that the property can be sold at a price sufficient to cover the Diocesan debt on the property (\$3 Million) and its investment in the property and improvements thereon.
- Mayor Nutter, greeted warmly by the Convention, gave an impassioned talk in support of a resolution on gun violence which passed virtually unanimously.

While much remains to turn around the affairs of the Diocese, St. Thomas' representatives at the Convention had the impression, from the balanced tenor of the Convention, that there is real hope that, with God's help, our Diocese will manage through its difficult times successfully. But, it will take time and patience.

Respectfully submitted,

John C.S. Kepner