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At the Crossroads of America: *Experiencing Polegreen*

Polegreen sits squarely in the crossroads of American history: Great Awakening, Revolution, Civil War and Modern Preservation. At this historic place, the actions of average people set in motion events that freed our nation and gave the world the American voice of liberty. The Historic Polegreen Church Foundation continuously seeks new ways to describe the relevance of these ordinary people...

men like Samuel Morris, a simple bricklayer, who sought to worship in a manner outside the dictates of the established Anglican Church, and thereby set in motion a long chain of revolutionary events. Recently, the Foundation has enhanced the historic Polegreen site to feature a timeline of the history of civil and religious freedom, two new Road to Revolution State Heritage Trail signs, a welcome kiosk and now a visitor

center and office building. These additions complement the unique silhouette church structure, erected in 2001, that identifies the core archeological site. The Foundation continues to move forward by expanding our audience and capacity. Please enjoy the contents of this newsletter and pass it along to your friends and family. If you would like copies of this newsletter to share, please contact the office.



Pictured from Left to Right: Consultant Mary Ellen Stumpf, Executive Director Christopher Peace, Vice President Mary Aylett Payne, Hanover County Historical Society President Art Taylor, Board Member Bob Giles, President Robert Bluford, Jr., Secretary Jay Johnston, Dr. Doug Hicks, Polegreen Administrator and Development Consultant Missy Minton

Visitor Center and Foundation Office Dedication

The Foundation opened the doors of its new Visitor Center and Office building on September 21, 2010 and in the course of the dedication welcomed a few hundred "ambassadors" of Polegreen during a two day period of fellowship and festivity. Dr. Douglas A. Hicks, a University of Richmond Professor and ordained Presbyterian minister, offered the following remarks as the Foundation's keynote speaker. With Dr. Hicks' permission, the Foundation reprints them in this publication for your contemplation with emphasis added:

"It is an honor and a privilege to participate in this event today, to celebrate the new building that will support more visits to this historic site. It is also an honor to speak after the man whose vision and dedication made this day possible. Bob Bluford's tireless leadership and commitment have been truly remarkable.

Religious freedom.
Religious dissent. The right to

gather and worship according to the dictates of one's own conscience. These principles sound fascinating in the classroom, or in a theological library, or perhaps in a church sanctuary. Yet it is a challenge to make ideas come alive—truly to captivate the public's attention. They are not tangible. They don't translate into simple commodities,

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like coffee mugs or coffee table books. And yet great ideas like religious freedom have changed the world.

It may seem as if we are standing in a quiet field at the edge of some pretty trees alongside a relatively quiet road in Hanover County. But on the terrain of critical ideas, this afternoon we are standing at a world-shaping crossroads.

You know the story of what happened here. Looking over at the outlines of that church structure, we see that it was small in size. But there are other biblical narratives noting what could happen from small beginnings. “A little child shall lead them.” “David reached into his satchel and pulled out a small stone, and put it into his sling shot, and struck the Philistine in the head.” “If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, move...” and so on.

And indeed, we are also here to celebrate the new support structure in front of you. The architects have done such a remarkable job of creating a building that is attractive and functional without taking away attention from the original structure.

We are mostly here, though, to celebrate an idea, and its central importance not for history, but for our world today. It is the idea that John Locke had laid out in his Letter Concerning Toleration

in 1685. Locke knew that ideas could get you killed. He wrote—as an exile in Holland—that just governments have nothing to fear from dissenting religious congregations.



Dr. Douglas Hicks

When the Virginia Governor’s Council licensed four dissenting congregations, including this one, and a young Samuel Davies was the first non-Anglican preacher licensed to minister here at Polegreen, that idea became a reality in Virginia. And when the General Assembly of Virginia in 1786, meeting in Richmond at 14th and Main Street, passed the Virginia Statute for Religious Liberty, the idea was transformed fully into a legislated guarantee.

In the mid 1700s it was the Presbyterians who were called dissenters and who needed the protections of religious freedom. The patriot Patrick Henry would learn about great oratory here at Polegreen and go on to declare that he would choose to lose his life before he would lose his freedom. Over in Orange County, the patriot James Madison saw Virginia

Baptists being persecuted, and that would influence him to work for religious freedom.

The debates in the Commonwealth at the time were largely among Anglicans, Baptists, and Presbyterians. Yet their vision was wider than that. The patriot Thomas Jefferson argued that the Virginia Delegates who legislated religious liberty “meant to comprehend, within the mantle of its protection, the Jew and the Gentile, the Christian and Mohometan, the Hindoo, and Infidel of every denomination.” Virginia’s leaders had broad vision—Jefferson called it universal—of America’s religious horizons.

Polegreen stands as a living crossroads for the contemporary world. Some of us have asked recently, Why should we care about an Islamic Center in New York City? We could answer that question—most fundamentally—with two simple words: religious freedom. We could also answer it another way—with one word: Polegreen. Or put another way: In 1740, Presbyterians were dissenters; now [they] are mainliners, or perhaps oldliners. Now, at a crossroads, we don’t all have to agree on what a congregation in lower Manhattan should look like, and, perhaps, we don’t agree. But the great thing about religious freedom is that we don’t do congregations by opinion polling or by popular demand. We

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Facility Use

Polegreen is perfect for group functions, family reunions, picnics, and weddings. For more information on hosting your special event at Historic Polegreen Church, please visit the website at http://historicpolegreen.org/resources/pdf/facility_use.pdf.

The Facility use fee is \$500 which includes use of structure, picnic tables, and restroom facility in building. Other limited use which includes the reservation of the multi-purpose board room is \$100. A cleaning and damage deposit of \$250 is required. The deposit of the facility fee must be submitted with this application within seven (7) calendar days of the reservation in order to hold the event date. The deposit is non-refundable. There are no refunds due to inclement weather. The cleaning and damage deposit is \$250 and separate from the facility fee. All major credit cards are accepted.

Membership

Since the opening of the new building, visitation to the Polegreen site has exploded. To attest to the insurgent interest, our memberships have tripled and requests for site usage have equally grown. Community groups, using a membership benefit, are scheduling business meetings and retreats in the new multi-purpose board room on site. While these blessings are evident, so is the need to maintain the site in a condition worthy of Polegreen's new guests. Please consider purchasing a membership to support the daily work of the Foundation and avail yourself of the opportunities membership presents. You may order your membership or buy one as a gift for the holidays



Local businessman Sean Davis and his family joined the Foundation as a new Member in 2010

online at www.historicpolegreen.org. If you would like to speak directly with Polegreen's membership office, please call (804) 730-3837.

Membership levels are \$25 Teacher/Student, \$40 Individual, \$60 Family/Household, or \$75 for a Group. Gift Memberships are a great idea at a level of your choice. Member benefits include a newsletter and other special communications; advance notice and email alerts on activities and programs; invitations to receptions and special events; and a discount

on facility use and program fees. Membership costs are tax deductible unless taking advantage of financial discount. As a member of the Foundation you become a vital part of preserving the origins of religious freedom in America!

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guarantee religious freedom. I would like to emphasize Polegreen as a crossroads in a more local way, and in a way that sheds a more positive light on religious freedom. It comes from yesterday's newspaper. The front page of the metro section of the Richmond Times-Dispatch. We read of two important events of religious freedom in everyday interaction. Side by side are articles about the Richmond

Peace Festival and an interfaith community event in Bon Air hosted by the Islamic Center of Virginia. These events are reflections of our rich and broad central Virginia community, and they are examples of leadership to bring people together at public crossroads. We are standing at one of those important early crossroads of religious freedom. The new [visitor center and office] building makes it possible for people

of many backgrounds to visit Polegreen and celebrate the Virginian and American value of religious freedom. I will be bringing my students here, and the conference room gives us a place to hold a seminar discussion to reflect on the significance of what took place here. We are grateful to the many people whose work made this new center possible; may Polegreen continue to be a world-shaping crossroads.



Christopher K. Peace, Esq.
Executive Director

Remarks offered at a sponsor's preview reception hosted onsite September 20, 2010.

Good evening and welcome to Polegreen. My name is Chris Peace, Executive Director of the Historic Polegreen Church Foundation. I am honored to represent this Foundation which preserves and interprets one of the nation's most valued historic sites, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, an commemorating the Reverend Samuel Davies and the Hanover dissenters successful struggle for civil and religious freedom.

I want to thank each of you for your support of this organization and for joining us as we celebrate another enhancement milestone in this Foundation's history. With your help, just a few short years from now, in 2018, the 275th Anniversary of the founding of Polegreen Church, this Foundation

From the Desk of the Executive Director

will be saluted for its leadership in the historic interpretation of civil and religious freedom in Virginia through preservation of the site and view-shed, substantive community outreach and rich educational programs.

As a dedicated ambassador of this Foundation, you already know that Polegreen is more than just an exit on I-295 or a produce stand in eastern Hanover County. Here the actions of average people set in motion the events that freed our nation and gave the world the American voice of liberty. The Foundation continuously seeks new ways to describe the relevance of these ordinary people...men like Samuel Morris, a simple bricklayer, who embraced change and accomplished revolutionary feats.

Over the past four years, the Foundation has enhanced this historic site to feature a timeline of the history of civil and religious freedom, two new Road to Revolution State Heritage Trail signs, a first class welcome kiosk and now a visitor center and office building. I think you will agree that these actions have complimented the famous silhouette church structure that identifies the core archeological site.

In addition to our building (and famous house moving) programs, the Foundation now offers a comprehensive set of SOL-based

school lesson plans authored by a local public school teacher. Last year we engaged a talented Virginia Commonwealth University Professor who coordinates school visits to the site as well as leads an Education Advisory Council. Council members are in attendance tonight and include a Randolph-Macon professor, the historian for the Virginia State Capitol, a former state superintendant and other area education leaders and historians. Please take a minute to visit our website at www.historicpolegreen.org and learn more of our on-site educational programs and other outreach.

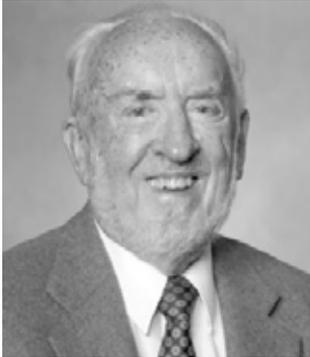
In case you thought that we would be satisfied with our progress to date, in recent days, Polegreen Directors have met with Dr. Charles F. Bryan and Dr. Daniel Jordan for a strategic planning initiative. The Board is diligently working to develop new audiences, programs, and a succession plan for a strong start to the 2011 fiscal year.

All this work, these important initiatives, helps us tell the Polegreen story to a "replacement generation" of Americans. Our story like many others is a thread woven into our cultural fabric. Stories are a common bond. They tell us who we are. Polegreen's story is comprised of the struggle for religious freedom, civil liberty,

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President's Message - "Telling the Story"



Robert Bluford, Jr.
President

One of the most important lessons we have learned during the two-decade life of the Foundation is that we have an extremely important story to tell. Its significance lies in several dimensions and they are all important to the well being of every citizen of our country and beyond. The role that religion is playing in the life of individuals, communities, and nations throughout the world is at the present time of the utmost importance. Without fear of contradiction we avow that what we are dealing with ranks high on everyone's agenda, whether or not they are aware of it.

Executive Director Continued from Page 4

and toleration. The Polegreen story tell us who we are and where we have come from as Virginians and as Americans. This week we celebrate the beginning of another chapter in Polegreen's history.

In May of 2007, I shared with

In the time it takes for me to write these words the probability is high that somewhere on this planet hundreds will die for their religious beliefs or practices.

We have learned at Polegreen that large numbers of visitors who come are unaware of the history of religious toleration, or lack of it, here in our own land. When we share with them what it was like in Colonial Virginia during Samuel Davies time, it usually is truly an eye-opener.

The great progress that has been made in enhancing the archeological site and the continuing development of our programs is not the work of just a few people. Since the beginning of our efforts in 1990 we have had the support of many persons, and for that we are grateful to many who read these words. Thank you for your help that we hope brings you much satisfaction.

Sincerely,
Robert Bluford, Jr.

you our vision that "Over the next few months, you will see this site transform. The on-going commitment to enhance this site is motivated by a strong desire to make it a welcoming and informative place for tourists, school children and even pilgrims. We want people to come to this

Road to Revolution State Heritage Trail

This year marks the tangible progress of the Road to Revolution State Heritage Trail through a series of successful and well attended events unveiling interpretative signage at each of the ten Patrick Henry sites. The celebration series concludes in November with the Governor Henry lecture at the Library of Virginia. Polegreen hosted a Lawnchairs and Liberty concert in July with Susan Greenabum to celebrate Independence Day week and reveal the two signs at our historic site. Virginia Logos, the Greater Richmond Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Virginia Department of Transportation are managing the production and placement of 54 small trailblazer signs and 8 of the large signs for a total of 62 signs statewide marking the Trail for the travelling public. A local graphic sign company named Acorn Graphics will design and manufacture the signage. Be on the look out this winter for these new markers and plan your trips now for the Spring and Summer to follow Henry on the Road to Revolution! Visit www.roadtorevolution.org!

sanctuary and learn more about themselves." Here we are. We hope you enjoy your experience.

Your presence here this evening is an indication of your on-going commitment to the mission of this Foundation which continues to move forward. Thank you.



Polegreen Ambassadors

By Robert Bluford, Jr.

On a number of occasions I have expressed publicly my appreciation for the help given us over the years by the staff of Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. That help has never taken the form of financial support. In my judgment the sharing of wisdom and counsel has been far more valuable. From the very beginning most of the aid has been given us by Dr. Robert Birney who for many years was Vice President of Education. His office determined what and how their educational programs were developed and executed.

In 1992 Dr. Birney addressed the Presbytery of the James on the subject of how important Polegreen is. During his speech he stated that of all means of giving publicity to Colonial Williamsburg, including advertising, radio and television, mailings news releases, etc., none produced the results created by one

person telling another what a great visit they had experienced.

We are in the process of creating a definable organization within this Foundation that will be a support group dedicated to doing a variety of tasks. Already we have persons who mow and keep weeds under control in the open space at the site. Increasing numbers of persons ask what they can do to help and keep costs down. To that end, if you are interested in helping or becoming a Polegreen Ambassador please contact the Foundation at (804) 730-3837.

The first task we invite your assistance with is a commitment to invite others to visit the site and accompany them if necessary. We wish to get the word out in a personal way, thereby giving substance to our mission.

Educational and Community Outreach

With construction taking place on site for a majority of the year, the Foundation endeavored to expand collaborative programming and take the Polegreen message to a wider regional audience. This effort included attending the Hanover Tomato Festival, the Ashland Strawberry Faire, and recent co-sponsorships of a book lecture by Harlow Giles Unger concerning his new work *Lion of Liberty* with the Hanover Tavern Foundation and Hanover County Historical Society.



Congressman Cantor learns about the significant acts of religious dissent in his district at Ashland Strawberry Faire.

This Fall Polegreen's director of education Dr. Farrah Graham attended two statewide conferences to promote Polegreen lesson plans and site visits. Among the meetings attended were the Virginia Association of Independent Schools and the statewide public social studies teacher conference in Williamsburg. Dr. Graham

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Mission & Vision

Vision Statement

By 2018, the 275th Anniversary of the founding of Polegreen Church, the Foundation will be recognized for its leadership in the historic interpretation of civil and religious freedom in Colonial Virginia through preservation of the site, community outreach and educational programs.

Mission Statement

To preserve the historic Polegreen Church site and commemorate the struggle for civil and religious freedom in Colonial Virginia by Rev. Samuel Davies and the Hanover Dissenters.

To what end: By accomplishing this mission, we preserve the memory of Hanover Dissenters who struggled courageously and successfully for civil and religious freedom in Virginia and in so doing increase appreciation for the liberties that we enjoy today in the United States.



Sponsorships

During our Annual Fund drive, the Foundation is also soliciting sponsorships and naming opportunities for our new Visitor Center and Foundation Office. Leave your mark at the “Cradle of Religious Freedom”! Make your impact on historic preservation! Honor a special person, recognize your school or commemorate a special event by sponsoring one of the listed items.

- Conference Table (limit 3): \$2,000
- Conference Chairs (limit 15): \$250
- Conference Room (limit 2): \$5,000
- Side Tables (limit 2): \$250
- Refreshment Center (limit 1): \$1,000
- Breezeway (limit 2): \$2,500
- Brick walkway (limit 2): \$2,500
- Foundation Office (limit 2): \$1,000
- Supply Closet (limit 1): \$1,000

Many convenient ways to order . . . You may use any of our listed methods: phone, mail order, or fax. All major credit cards are accepted. We will gladly provide confirmation of your order for tax-deduction purposes. Proceeds from this project are tax deductible and support the Historic Polegreen Church Foundation, its perpetual care of the new visitor building, and its ongoing preservation of historic site. Thank you for your support!

Charge my gift of \$ _____ to: (circle)

VISA MasterCard Amex Discover

Card #: _____

3 or 4 Digit Code: _____ Exp. Date: _____

Name (as it appears on card) and Billing Address:

Signature: _____

Name(s) as you prefer for recognition

Education And Outreach Continued from Page 6

proudly announced that the latest lesson plan available on www.historicpolegreen.org is targeted for AP level students and teachers. Mrs. June Lehman, teacher at St. Catherine’s School and member of the Foundation Educational Council, drafted the plan pro bono. The Foundation wishes to thank both of these fine educators for their service to the mission.

In related news, Dr. Graham will be leading a pilot program with St. Catherine’s School located off-site at the Virginia State Capitol on Friday December 16 at 10am. The pilot will feature a mock debate in Senate chamber and afterwards a tour. Executive Director and state Delegate Christopher Peace will welcome the students on behalf of Polegreen and the House of Delegates.

If you would like to have your child’s class visit Polegreen or learn more about the Foundation’s educational outreach please do not hesitate to contact the office at (804) 730-3837 or by email at support@historicpolegreen.org. All lesson plans may be found at <http://historicpolegreen.org/resources/>.

Sign up
for e-newsletter
on our website!!
Visit
www.historicpolegreen.org!!



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