

## Time Travel Activity: What Really Happened

# 1: Colonists did find a way to listen to the ministers from other religions. They met at “reading houses” or “meeting houses”. This usually began at someone’s house where the bible, sermons, and other pieces of literature were read. One of these places was the Polegreen Meeting House built in Hanover County, Virginia. Only a few dissenting ministers were allowed in the county as long as they applied for and received a license to preach. Samuel Davies was the first minister to receive this type of license. He started the Presbyterian Church in the colony of Virginia. Official taxation that supported state appointed ministers did not end until the time of the American Revolution.

# 2: Thomas Jefferson, as a member of the House of Delegates, first introduced the idea that people should have freedom of religion in 1779. The document was called the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom. The idea that a government should not enforce and support one religion was controversial at the time. The state of Virginia was not ready for such change at that time. The state was ready a few years later while Jefferson worked in France, his good friend James Madison ushered the statute into law in 1786. Virginia became the first state to separate church from the government. The Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom became the groundbreaking legislation for other states and eventually the nation as laws were passed to support freedom of religion. When the Bill of Rights is added to the U.S. Constitution in 1791, the First Amendment defines and protects religious freedom: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...” First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution