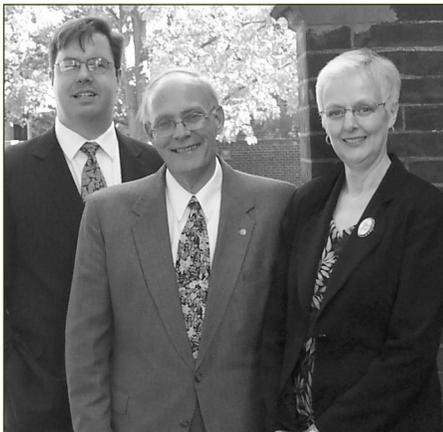


DEFENDING THE ESTABLISHMENT



Those who attended our spring program, *Defending the Establishment*, at the Watts Chapel on the Union Theological Seminary campus were treated to a spirited discussion of the Anglican Church's alarm and apprehension about the growing "threat" embodied by Samuel Davies and his congregations of Presbyterian dissenters in colonial Virginia. John Hamant, center, delivered dramatic readings from extracts of various colonial letters expressing the Establishment's fears while University of Oxford graduate student Al Zambone and Colonial Williamsburg historian Linda Rowe provided historical context.

Polegreen Hires an Executive Director

Historic Polegreen Church Foundation is pleased to announce that Mr. Christopher Peace has enthusiastically signed on to help lead the organization and implement its strategic plan. When he's not working for Polegreen, Chris will be devoting his time to another fairly important Virginia institution: the Virginia House of Delegates. Chris was elected to represent the 97th District in a Special Election last January. The 97th serves parts of Hanover, Caroline, King William, King and Queen, Henrico, Spotsylvania Counties and all of New Kent County.



Polegreen undertook the search back in May. Under the leadership of Board Vice-President Mary Payne, the search committee interviewed several candidates and Chris' star rose to the top. Mary and the committee are very pleased with his appointment: "We are looking forward to working with such an energetic and enthusiastic executive director."

Chris takes his appointment seriously: "To me, Polegreen Church is more than just a historic site in Hanover County. It symbolizes the human struggle for true religious freedom, tolerance and liberty. I want to thank the Board of the Foundation for trusting me with this tremendous opportunity."

Prior to his election, Chris was a political consultant with McGuireWoods Consulting, a national public affairs and public relations firm. He has also worked as a legislative aide to then-Delegate Eric Cantor (now 7th District US Congressman) and as a law clerk for the Richmond City Attorney and Mark Earley, who was then Attorney General of Virginia.

Chris received a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Hampden-Sydney College and earned his Juris Doctor from the University of Richmond School of Law. He and his wife, Ashley, live in Mechanicsville.

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The News from Historic Polegreen Church Foundation

Inside:

- News of our fall program
- Consortium for Richmond's Religious History
- A letter from the President
- Polegreen's leadership
- Preservation of Polegreen's surroundings
- Polegreen hires an Executive Director

Preserving Virginia's contributions to America's religious freedom

Make Time for Our Fall Program

Dan Roberts, host of the nationally syndicated history program, *A Moment in Time*, will delve into the mind of the Rev. Samuel Davies on Sunday, 5 November at 2:30 at Polegreen Church site on Rural Point Road in Hanover County. Roberts will don the robes of Davies and present extracts of some of his most notable sermons to explore the values and beliefs of this challenger to religious orthodoxy.

Davies was minister to seven dissenting congregations in Virginia from 1747 to 1759. In order to do so, he was obliged to petition an often reluctant colonial government for a license to preach. His arguments in support of his calling and for religious toleration in general often put him at odds with the colony's leadership, but it would be a mistake to define him as a malcontent, constantly stirring up trouble. True, Davies distinguished himself as a challenger to the status quo but he occasionally found himself allied with the government. His support of the French and Indian War and ability to mobilize volunteers for Virginia's regiments caused Governor Dinwiddie to label him "the best recruiter in the colony."

Now, don't be put off by that word "sermon." Davies was a master at penning—and delivering—messages that were both eloquent and passionate. Listening to his words, his phrasing, his ability to organize and explain his position offers an audience the opportunity to understand why he was one of the most effective orators in British America (a view shared late in life by Patrick Henry, himself no slouch when it came to oratory.)

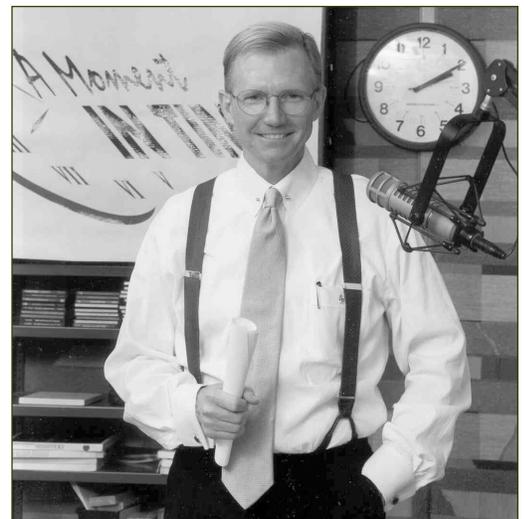
And Dan Roberts is no stranger to the pulpit either. While in college he began work as a Presbyterian minister. Professional training at Princeton Theological Seminary (Master of Divinity, 1974) was followed by

pastorates in West Virginia, Tennessee, and South Carolina. His work as a minister was recognized in August, 1986 when he was invited to serve as Guest Chaplain of the United States Senate.

Mr. Roberts is perhaps best known as the host and executive producer of *A Moment in Time* and *Climbing Jacob's Ladder*, two historical radio programs originating at 88.9 FM, WCVE, Richmond. These programs, heard by over three million listeners per day, are broadcast on over 140 public radio stations in the United States, XM and Sirius Satellite Networks, plus the Armed Forces Radio Network. He is heard regularly on the English language broadcasts of the Voice of America. He is currently Associate Professor of Liberal Arts and History at the University of Richmond.

So, mark 5 November on your calendar and come see one of the country's most prominent advocates for history present the story of Polegreen Church in his own unique style. The event is free of charge.

*Call 804.261.3837 or log on to
www.historicpolegreen.org
for more information.*



Dan Roberts

READ ALL ABOUT IT, ER, HIM!

Living on the Borders of Eternity, by the President of the Polegreen Foundation, Bob Bluford, Jr., is available by mail order. The book is a meticulously researched account of the adversities colonial dissenters overcame to practice their faith and Rev. Samuel Davies' leadership in challenging the traditional authority of the Church of England. Book critic John Dalles writes that "Samuel Davies' life reads like a historical novel, complete with romance, disease and disaster, with love and laughter complete with conflict with authorities both secular and religious."

Christmas is coming . . . !

The hard-backed book is \$24.95 (plus \$1.25 Virginia sales tax). Mail your check made out to Historic Polegreen Press to:

Historic Polegreen Press
Post Office Box 2111
Mechanicsville, VA 23116

Telling the *Whole* Story of Religion in Richmond

Who knew there were so many organizations in the Richmond area dedicated to exploring our community's rich and diverse religious history? Back in December 2003 a collection of these cultural and historical organizations began to meet, getting to know one another and exploring ways we might better highlight the area's nationally significant heritage. Since then, we have discussed ways we might partner with one another in order to reach broader audiences and achieve goals we might otherwise be unable to accomplish alone.

We are pleased to announce that the group, called the Consortium for Richmond's Religious History, has put together a series of programs in 2007 that we think you will find fascinating and provocative. Drawing on resources as diverse as the archives of the Virginia State Library and the renowned One Voice Choir, we promise you experiences that will dovetail neatly with the programming that the Polegreen Foundation puts on each Spring and Fall.

The highlight of the series will be an opportunity for members of the community to sign a reprint of the Statute for Religious Freedom as a

reaffirmation of our nation's commitment to the separation of church and state (the original statute, written by Thomas Jefferson, was voted into law by the Virginia state government in 1786, guaranteeing freedom of conscience). We hope to present the Statute and over 15,000 signatures to Governor Kaine on the anniversary of the statute's passage, 16 January 2008.

Look for more information on these exciting programs in the next newsletter!

The consortium includes:

A More Perfect Union
Beth Ahabah Museum and Archives
Historic Polegreen Church Foundation
Council for America's First Freedom
Museum of Virginia Catholic History
Patrick Henry Committee, St. John's Church
Sixth Mt. Zion Baptist Church
Soka Gakkai
Virginia Baptist Historical Society

(A more detailed explanation of each organization will appear in our next newsletter.)

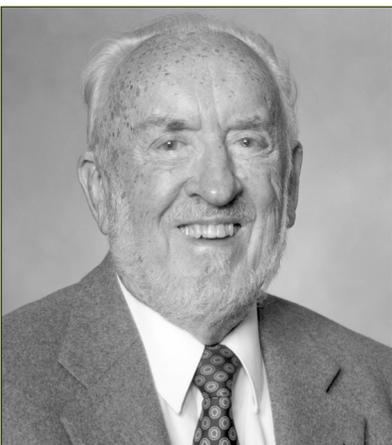
Letter From the President

As you read these words, our efforts to realize the vision of the Historic Polegreen Church Foundation become more a reality. As you will read elsewhere in this newsletter we have achieved the seemingly impossible dream we had fifteen years ago of protecting the viewshed of the site where the eighteenth-century church stood. As our vision statement reads, we not only aim to protect the site but also to dedicate ourselves to interpreting the history that occurred there. We are now focusing our main attention on this portion of our mission.

During the past year, we have spent much time and energy on the second phase of our mission. Enabling us in this task is the addition of new board members that almost doubles the size of our board of directors. We now number fourteen. But numbers don't tell the whole story; the experience, dedication and energy that now is embodied in all our members strengthens my belief that a Grateful Providence has been overseeing what is taking place at the site where Samuel Davies and the Hanover dissenters struggled for religious freedom more than two hundred and fifty years ago.

I have for many years felt that the preservation of any historic site was only half of the task, only a point of departure. Interpretation that marries past and present is—and should be—our primary objective. This is especially true of places like the Polegreen Church. As we now move into a new era we covet your continuing involvement with us.

Gratefully and sincerely yours,
Bob Bluford



In Good Hands

Polegreen Foundation has certainly been blessed having Bob Bluford as its founder and president. But as he is quick to point out, he is not shouldering the entire load. Working with Bob is a dedicated and diverse group of people who are all committed to the mission of the Foundation. The folks you see in the picture each bring not only a commitment to religious freedom in America but special skills and expertise to support and nurture the development of the organization.

Working left to right, **Vashti Davie-Taylor** is a retired public school administrator and brings her passion for education to the board. **David Bradley** is Vice President for Finance & Administration at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Foundation. **Harry Warthen** is senior counsel at Hunton Williams, serves on the board of several history-related organizations throughout the state and is currently a member of the Board of Advisors to the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Bob Bluford III is Eastern Zone Vice President of Sales for Gulf South Medical Supply, an organization that bought the company he built from the ground up. In front of him, **Bob Giles**, who is Executive Vice President—Investments at Davenport & Company LLC contributes his financial acumen to the board. He also serves as a member of the Hanover Tavern Foundation Advisory Board and is a former President of the

APVA/Preservation Virginia.

Standing behind Bob is **Sumpter Priddy**. Born and raised in Hanover County, Sumpter is a self-described



agitator and is currently leading efforts to publish a history of the county. Hiding behind Sumpter is **Jay Johnston**, an attorney with the firm of Troutman Sanders, where he specializes in corporate law. He is an ardent advocate for Virginia's heritage and is a member of numerous state and local historical societies.

To Jay's left is **Dr. Jack Sadler**, Pastor Emeritus of First Presbyterian Church in Richmond. Jack has been instrumental in developing and leading the process that became the Foundation's strategic plan. In front of him stands another person who has been crucial to Polegreen's evolution. **Richard Barrett**, president and CEO of B. C. Wood Products, Inc., in Ashland, has

been the Foundation's Treasurer for many years.

Next in line is **Dick Beadles**, a retired railroad and real estate executive who has served on the board for five years. Dick has led the charge to ensure that the Foundation's governance and fiscal accountability are in line with non-profits' best practices. **Everett Reveley** recently received his MBA from the University of Virginia and currently works as a research analyst at Davenport & Company. At the end of the line is **Richard Bartell**, who heads up the Building Inspectors Department for Hanover County.

Finally, but by no means least, is **Mary Payne**. Mary retired as Executive Director of the Capital Area Agency on Aging in 1998 and since then has served in numerous volunteer positions with non-profit and governmental organizations.

The Foundation's Nominations Committee has gone out of its way to ensure a Board that represents a mix of disciplines and demographics. Professional, religious, educational and governmental representation ensures a balanced custodianship of our resources. They may all come from different walks of life but they share a common trait: a passion for the importance of the Polegreen Story.

The Foundation is in good hands.

Land Acquisition Nearing an End

Shortly after the acquisition of the three-and-one-half-acre site on Rural Point Road where the Polegreen Church once stood until it was burned during the Civil War, architect Carlton Abbott visited the site with Bob Bluford. The date was 1990. Standing near surviving Civil War earthworks that border the site, Abbott noted that "one of the great challenges that faces the Polegreen Foundation is going to be trying to interpret colonial Virginia history in the midst of urban sprawl. And the only way to control what is around you is to own it." What Carlton

was suggesting seemed at the time to be absolutely impossible in light of rising real estate values in the area. Besides, a small subdivision of eight houses was already built along side of the site.

A detailed account of our efforts to acquire neighboring tracts of land would require much more space than is available in this newsletter. In short, we have in the past weeks completed our goal of owning the land that is seen as one looks out around the historic site. We have during the past sixteen years acquired a total of 110

acres of land. This is a near miracle, taking into consideration the growth of greater Richmond during this same time. We have been fortunate enough to combine the support and opportunities provided by such diverse sponsors as real estate developers and philanthropists with federal government tax credits and battlefield protection grants.

This work is near done and allows us to now focus on using the site to educate and inform the community on the people who once worshipped here and the ideas they espoused.