Managing the Mission

by Jill Worth, FHCC President

In January of 1958, a group of area residents met at the parish house of Grace Church in Kilmarnock. The purpose of the meeting was to create an organization to preserve and protect Christ Church. After a series of meetings, The Foundation for Historic Christ Church was established that June. The Mission Statement reads in part: “to preserve and maintain old Christ Church, sometimes known as Robert (‘King’) Carter’s Church in Lancaster County … to preserve its early dignity and beauty as nearly as may be feasible; to protect and care for the church, its ancient churchyard and surrounding properties; to collect, preserve and display the records of its use and of the persons active in its history.”

The meeting minutes were typed on a typewriter, with pencil insertions to correct spelling or grammar. From reading the minutes, it’s obvious that historic preservation tenets have changed; in 1958 a speaker from the National Trust for Historic Preservation proposed that heat and lighting be added to the church, but that these additions should be “not too pronounced.” Those founding FHCC stood firm in not adding heat or light.

In the last 62 years, much has changed at FHCC, with the construction of a research library, museum, event center and office space. New technologies abound in our interactive exhibitions, research databases and administrative offices. Viewers around the world can now tour Christ Church virtually. What has NOT changed is the mission. Although the verbiage of the original mission statement has been shortened, it still states that the mission is “to preserve Robert Carter’s gift of old Christ Church, Lancaster County, Virginia, and its ancient churchyard in its dignity and beauty, to care for its surroundings and to record and tell its history and that of its people that this legacy of our common heritage may be a source of learning and inspiration.” Like those founders who shunned modernizations of heat and light, we remain committed to keep the church as nearly as is practicable as it came from the hands of the builders in 1735. Another element of consistency is the loyalty of our dedicated volunteers. Ms. Nancy Hubbard Clark has completed over 45 years of service. Many others have 30 years or more. There have been changes this past year, but also stability. Office and Burying Ground Manager Trish Geeson agreed to postpone her retirement to 2007 and Director of Administration and Finance from 2007 to 2009, has agreed to give us some of his time and talent as a part-time advisor and will keep all of us managing the mission. Finally, and for me the most exciting thing; Robert Teagle celebrates 20 years with FHCC in March, and we hope he has 20 more years here as he begins a new role as Executive Director. The founders would be proud.

They would also be proud of our crowded calendar of events. Alan Taylor, who has twice won the Pulitzer Prize for History, spoke in February. An exceptional list of historians headlines this year’s Sunday Speaker Series, the theme of which is “A Variety of Religious Experiences: Natives, Africans and Europeans in Early Virginia.” In June FHCC will host Thomas Jefferson (Bill Barker) and Patrick Henry (Richard Schuman) as they debate the role of government and taxation in promoting religion in society. These are but some of the highlights. Check our ChristChurch1735.org for our full schedule of events!

Last year more than 13,000 guests visited our campus or participated in our programs. This includes visitors to the church and museum, school groups, special group tours, summer programs, baptisms, weddings, church services, concerts, our speaker series, the craft beer fest and other special community events. I suspect that the founders would be amazed that the vision they had in January 1958 would lead to this level of interest and success.

Every one of you who reads this is both a recipient of the gift these founders gave us and part of the continuing story of the loyal followers who support the mission to “preserve Robert Carter’s gift of old Christ Church.”
In July we hosted two traveling exhibitions as part of our 2019 programs that commemorated the historic events of 1619 Virginia: the Hampton History Museum’s 1619: Arrival of the First Africans (shown here) and American Evolution’s The Great Charter and the General Assembly: Founding a Legacy in 1619.

Above: 14 youngsters participated in our Hands-On History Camp, where they made bricks, wrote with quill pens, took grave rubbings, made candles and baskets, created colonial silhouettes, dug for artifacts, played colonial games and more. Here participants gather with members of the HCC&M Education Committee, who led the three-day camp.

Below: Participants in the annual Northern Neck History Fair pose with their certificates and American Evolution swag bags after an awards ceremony in April. The fair had a “1619 Virginia” theme.

Left, top: Award-winning author Connie Lapallo was one of four acclaimed historians in our Sunday Speaker Series: “The Bones of Our Past: Jamestown and the Making of America.” Lapallo vividly recreated the story of Joan Peirce and her daughter, who survived a hurricane at sea and Jamestown’s Starving Time to make a new life in the fledgling Virginia colony.

Left, below: The Williamsburg Baroque quartet the Wren Masters combined eyewitness accounts and period music in their fall performance “Jamestown 1619: Music from the New World and the Old.”

Top left: Volunteers Mary Grafton Yagel (left) and Linda Coye sample some of the goodies at the Volunteer Recognition Brunch in November.

Below left: In September Dallas Henderson (left) visited HCC&M doing research on his ancestors Sam and Beverly Harrison, two of the more than 500 enslaved people emancipated by Robert Carter III’s 1791 Deed of Emancipation. While viewing our exhibition on this incredible story Dallas met Peggy Patterson Garland, who had recently written a book on the topic. Joining Peggy was her friend Harold Hinson.

Below right: A record crowd of over 300 people attended “The Holly & The Ivy,” which collected a record amount of food (616 pounds) for the Healthy Harvest Food Bank.
The foundation has hundreds of friends, business sponsors, and organizations, near and far, who evidence their commitment to the preservation and interpretation of Historic Christ Church through their financial support in one way or another. Our appreciation to all of you for your personal and institutional support.

1735 Society: $5,000 or more

Benefits: $2,500 - $4,999

Guardians of the Past: $1,000 - $2,499

Patrons: $500 - $999

Friends: $100 - $499

Affiliates: $10 - $99
Generosity from foundations and business partners helps Historic Christ Church & Museum bring innovative exhibitions, hands-on history programs and special community events to visitors of all ages and backgrounds. In 2019 we added two exciting exhibitions to our museum, created a virtual tour to reach digital visitors around the globe, and partnered with American Evolution to commemorate the historic events of 1619 Virginia.

Be A Builder: Grants from the Jessie Ball duPont Fund, the River Counties Community Foundation and the J. Edwin Treakle Foundation funded Be A Builder, a touchscreen, interactive exhibition that teaches children about Christ Church’s architecture (photo, top right); the enslaved, indentured and free craftspeople who constructed this extraordinary building; and the tools and technologies these builders used. Be A Builder features beautiful casework and allows multiple users on two matching 46-inch screens set within a compass arch that evokes the windows in Christ Church.

Truss: River Counties Community Foundation funded the King-Post Roof Truss (also visible on photo above, back wall). Made of a high-density foam, the truss weighs about 20 lbs. and can be taken off the wall and used as a hands-on learning station for school and summer programs. The truss replicates carpenters’ notches and other tool marks like the real trusses in Christ Church’s roof to guide students as they assemble it with pegs and a mortise and tenon joint, one of the essential joints used by carpenters in colonial Virginia.

Virtual Tour: Thanks to a grant from the River Counties Community Foundation, visitors from around the world can now tour Historic Christ Church & Museum. Our new Virtual Tour uses a combination of panoramic images, historic and modern photographs, and video clips to tell the amazing story of Christ Church. Users pan 360 degrees around the church and churchyard as they explore various Points of Interest (POIs) like the ox-eye window, entablature, Carter pew and ox-eye window.

Brick: Brandon Hull of Hull Film produced the Virtual Tour. Brandon’s other virtual tours include Mount Vernon and Monticello.

View our virtual tour at ChristChurch1735.org/virtual-tour

Of the 305 organizations to participate in American Evolution, the Commonwealth’s official commemoration of 1619 Virginia, HCC&M was one of only five to receive the Statewide Partner Award. The award recognizes HCC&M’s 2019 programs that supported American Evolution, such as the Sunday Speaker Series on Jamestown, our Rappahannock Institute for Lifelong Learning (RILL) Class on “Virginia in 1619,” Bly Straube’s presentation on the women of early Virginia, the Wren Masters musical program on Jamestown, and our hosting of two traveling exhibitions related to 1619.

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View our virtual tour at ChristChurch1735.org/virtual-tour
Within the broad churchyard of Historic Christ Church lies a group of graves once enclosed by a much smaller brick wall of their own. That wall is gone, but the Kelley grave plot remains bordered by its original capstone, now set on the ground and enhanced with an ivy hedge. The iron gate that once led into the enclosure now resides in the nearby museum.

Within this space rest six large, white marble slabs, weathered but unmoved from the time they were installed in the 1850s. The entire plot was the work of James Kelley (Jr.), then nearly 70 and the last surviving of the ten children born to his parents, James (Sr.) and Judith. Faced with ordering a tombstone for his closest brother William, who had just died (1849), James, Jr. chose not only to honor him but to create a memorial in stone to all twelve in his family, by ordering marble slabs for them all. To do so he included descriptions of the six children not buried in the plot in the lengthy text inscribed upon the new marker for his father. And he arranged for a matching marble slab to be ordered for him upon his death.

One other grave marker lies within the Kelley grave plot, that of Dr. Charles Taylor. His modest upright headstone and footstone, carved from gray limestone, stand in contrast with the horizontal marble slabs that James Kelley ordered from Baltimore as monuments for his family. Why is it there? In the absence of any known family or other connection between him and the Kelloggs, and because he died long before the Kelley family plot was formed, the most likely reason is that Taylor’s grave already shared the small space of the churchyard that James (Jr.) decided to enclose and enhance. James (Jr.) chose to leave it undisturbed as he set about ordering the marble slab for William and four more, to replace the original markers of his parents and two brothers that were there. Those original Kelley markers would have been of the same simple design as that of Taylor.

What do we know of Dr. Charles Taylor? For many years, researchers of the parish history believed him to be Dr. Charles Taylor of Orange County, a veteran of the Revolutionary War and cousin of James Madison. This conclusion was in keeping with the phantom of his headstone, “Born in the County of Orange died in the County of Lancaster.” It was also, however, distinctly at odds with the ample documentary evidence, including an obituary, that Dr. Charles Taylor died in 1821, whereas “1825” is inscribed on the marker. A grave marker could certainly make a mistake, but to carve and deliver a marker stating a date of death four years in the future is not credible. It is more plausible that the Dr. Charles Taylor buried at Christ Church was another physician of the very same name, who died a few years earlier. By that time, the Taylors were related in a host of ways. Charles Taylor, Sr. and his brothers were all cousins of the future President. It is also from these pages that we learn of the birth of Charles Taylor, Jr. in the diary entry for 18 June 1790:

Cloudy and very warm morning. Had Irish potatoes planted in sweet potato patch. Capt. Byrdley was here and dined. Heard that Mr. Shepherd had a son born yesterday—C Taylor had a son born to-day.

A few months later, in the entry for 9 November 1790, Francis records more local news:

Heard that Mr. Jefferson & Madison passed by on their way to Philadelphia. We went to C. Taylor’s, whose son was christened. Charles – Uncle Taylor & family – Mr. Belmain & wife & my father were there Saturday morning.

So, from his loving uncle Francis, we have references to the birth and baptism of Charles Carter, Jr., written on the very day they occurred. Did Charles Taylor, Jr. grow up to become a doctor? Yes. Did he die in Lancaster County in 1825? Yes. Is he the Dr. Charles Taylor buried in the Kelley grave plot? Yes. One more piece found in the many historic mysteries presented by Historic Christ Church.
**2020 VISITOR HOURS**

*Due to the Coronavirus health alerts, we are postponing our Visitors Season Opening until May 1. Please visit ChristChurch1735.org for updates on all upcoming programs and events. Enjoy our virtual tour at ChristChurch1735.org/virtual-tour*

**OPEN MAY-OCTOBER:**
- Monday–Saturday 10:00 AM–4:00 PM
- Sunday 1:00–4:00 PM

**OPEN NOVEMBER:**
- Friday & Saturday 10:00 AM–4:00 PM
- Sunday 1:00–4:00 PM

**LAST TOURS** at 3:30 PM

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**GROUP TOURS** for eight or more persons throughout the year by advance appointment 804-438-2451 or info@christchurch1735.org.

**GROUNDS OPEN DAILY DAWN TO DUSK**

**RESEARCH LIBRARY** by advance appointment at 804-438-2451 or research1@christchurch1735.org.

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**20 Save the 20 Dates**

- **Kirk Ing of the Tartan**
  - April 26  ■  12:30 PM
  - Traditional Scottish blessing and celebration. Full tartan/Scottish church service. Bagpipes, drums, & marching parade with the Kilnarmock District & Pipe Band and the St. Andrew’s Society of Williamsburg.

- **Family Fun Ice Cream Social**
  - July 11  ■  11:00 AM–2:00 PM
  - Family fun with tasty ice cream treats and lemonade in a historic setting. Colonial games and crafts. Hands-on activities. Children of all ages welcome.

- **Hands-On History Camp at Historic Christ Church & Museum**
  - July 28–30  ■  10:00 AM–2:00 PM
  - Step back in time with this exciting program in colonial Virginia history: brickmaking, quill pen writing, grave rubbings, archaeology, colonial games, candle making, 18th-century dancing, basket weaving, portrait making, colonial clothing and more. Ages 7-12. Register at rteagle@christchurch1735.org. $50.00

- **Bringing Music to Life Concert Series:**
  - Soprano Willsonia Boyer
  - September 26  ■  4:00 PM
  - Soprano Willsonia Boyer, accompanied by Suzanne Daniel, presents songs of America. $25.00

- **“Raise the Roof” Craft Beer Fest**
  - October 17  ■  1:00–6:00 PM
  - Craft Beers, Wine, BBQ with fixings or veggie fare, Homemade Ice Cream and Live Music at one of Virginia’s most historic sites. $30.00 before October 1, $35 after October 1. $20 under 21. Free for 5 and under.

- **Sunday Speaker Series — An American Religious Experience**
  - Early Virginia
  - October 25  ■  2:00 PM

- **Sunday Speaker Series — A Variety of Religious Experiences: Natives, Africans and Europeans in Early Virginia**
  - November 8  ■  2:00 PM

- **The Holly & The Ivy**
  - December 7  ■  3:30 PM
  - Celebrate the season at Historic Christ Church with traditional songs, carols, and music. Join in this seasonal singfest in the beautifully “greened” church. Featuring members of The Chesapeake Chorale and the Christchurch School Cantorion. Dress warmly. Refreshments follow. Admission: 2 non-perishable items for Healthy Harvest Food Bank. $25.00

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Since 1735, as it came from the hands of its builders
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