



HISTORIC
POLEGREEN CHURCH
FOUNDATION

Strategic Plan 2023-2027



SHAFFER
COACHING+CONSULTING

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We embarked on updating the strategic plan for the Historic Polegreen Church Foundation (HPCF).

Since the last strategic plan, there was a historic land acquisition and an increase in community engagement and outreach events.

Over the next five years, the HPCF remains committed and passionate to preserving and sharing the long-lasting impact Samuel Davies had on the religious and civil liberties that we experience today. Also, there is an understanding that the historic land is sacred and provides a place of peace and community.

Samuel Davies was a committed, courageous leader who included the diverse communities around him in his quest to expand liberties. With that spirit, the HPCF continues Davies' legacy by being a leader in preserving history and educating the public about the strong links from our past to our liberties today.

Mission

The Historic Polegreen Church Foundation's mission is to interpret, preserve, and commemorate the struggle for civil and religious freedom in Colonial Virginia initiated by the Rev. Samuel Davies and the Hanover Dissenters.

Vision

Our vision is to be known as leaders and stewards of the history and impact of civil and religious freedoms.

WHO WE ARE

Programs & Services

Our programs and services are designed to educate and preserve as well as engage with the community. They include:

- Preserve the Historic Polegreen Church and the Studley site (Patrick Henry's birthplace).
- Host civil war lectures, heritage clubs, school presentations and field trips, and church holiday services
- Host wedding ceremonies & receptions
- Organize a Founder's day event featuring a historical presentation and information
- Present a Christmas holiday illumination event
- Provide online educational resources for public and private school historical programs
- Offer online historical videos, recordings, and documents
- Create online social media engagement through the website, Instagram and Facebook

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS



- Increased Site Visits (approximately 60,000 annually) and Weddings (approximately 50 annually)
- Served as a key sponsor and leader of the 300th anniversary of Hanover County
- Hosted events such as civil war lectures, heritage clubs, school trips, founder's lunch, naturalization ceremonies and holiday illumination
- Provided a safe outdoor gathering place during the pandemic
- Belong to the Road to Revolution Heritage Trail and Civil War Trails
- Increased social media & news engagement with over 1200 followers on Instagram, over 2500 followers on Facebook and have a rating of 4.9, article in Richmond Times, and honorable mention for a historical landmark in Mechanicsville Local)
- Secured Studley site (Patrick Henry's birthplace ~ 33 acres) and expanded the Foundation to a total of 147 total acres.

STRENGTHS & OPPORTUNITIES

Strengths

- The commitment of the Foundation's historical figures and current leaders and staff.
- The Polegreen Church is regarded as an iconic historic site in Hanover County, Virginia.
- The land of the Polegreen Church and Patrick Henry's birthplace is viewed as sacred and historic grounds.
- The HPCF history and impact involves over 275 years of history and both the Revolutionary and Civil Wars.
- The history is relatable & relevant to today regarding the importance of religious and civil liberties.

Opportunities

- To begin new archeological and interpretation efforts on the Polegreen Church and Patrick Henry's birthplace (Studley site).
- To begin construction of a new historical center/event site to expand education and community engagement programs.
- To expand and diversify our impact as educational leaders and stewards of Samuel Davies's pursuit of religious and civil liberties for all.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

**Education &
Community
Engagement**

Expand and diversify the educational programs and community outreach

Preservation

Increase the preservation efforts on the Studley & Church sites

**Operational
Excellence**

Strengthen operational quality and sustainability

Financial Excellence

Enhance fundraising efforts and financial stewardship

KEY PRIORITIES BY YEAR

2023

1. Initiate feasibility study for historical center/event site
2. Protect the Studley site from degradation
3. Strengthen programming with a historical-focused event(s)
4. Increase fundraising and grant efforts
5. Increase board diversity

2024

1. Identify & establish diverse community & church partnerships
2. Finalize historical center/event site plans
3. Begin capital campaign for center/event site & existing structures

2025

1. Initiate new Studley site archeological efforts
2. Initiate pedestrian / interpretation path for Studley site
3. Begin construction on historical center / event site

2026

1. Initiate a new archeological site for the Church site (aligns with highlighting the 20-year archeological report)
2. Initiate a new pedestrian/ interpretation path for the Church site
3. Evaluate programs & community partners

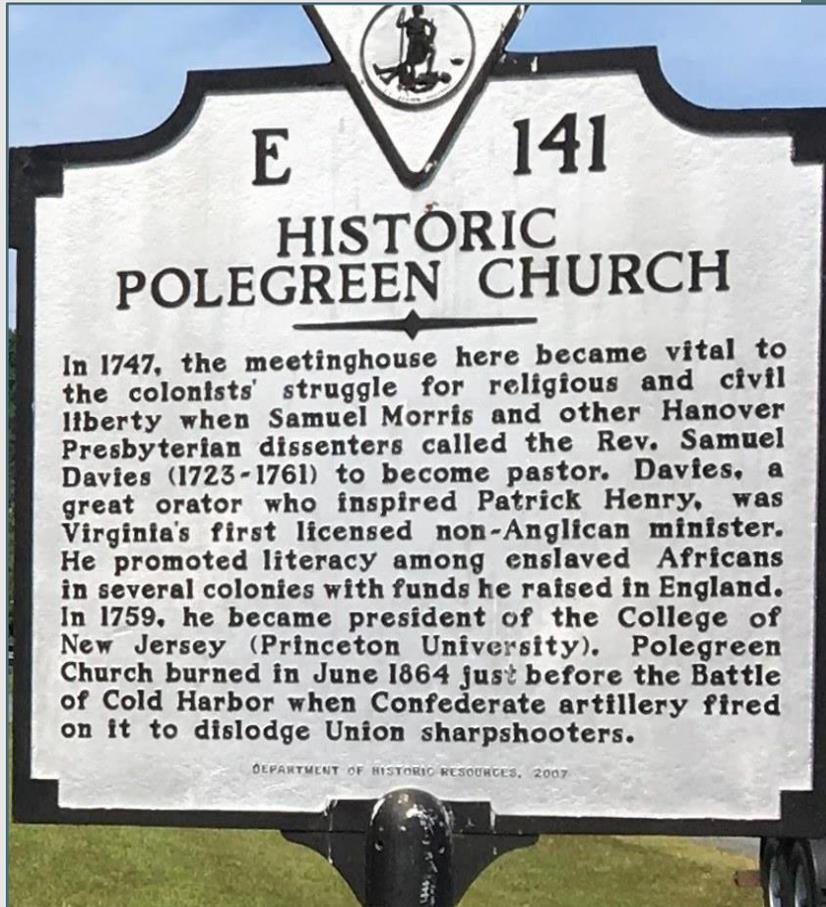
2027

1. Complete construction on historical center/ event site
2. Initiate new strategic plan

THE HISTORY WE PRESERVE

- Starting in 1607 and for 170 years, there was only one recognized religion in the Virginia Colony. In the late 1730's a powerful religious movement, which became known as the “Great Awakening,” took hold in the middle colonies.
- On Sunday afternoons, families and neighbors read the Bible and religious tracts, marking the beginning of the dissenter movement. By 1743, the Governor's Council in Williamsburg licensed four dissenters’ “reading houses.”
- In 1745, Samuel Davies was ordained at 22-yrs old as a Presbyterian evangelist. He accepted the request by the Hanover Dissenters to be the pastor of the “reading houses” in 1747. Davies became the first licensed dissenter in Virginia, and by 1748, he was officiating at seven meeting houses across five counties.
- In 1753, Davies established a relationship with a London-based organization that provided Bibles, prayer books, spelling books, and hymnals to distribute to enslaved Africans and African Americans. It is recorded that the books were found in Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and Georgia up to a century later.
- Davies preached that all persons, regardless of color, caste, or place of origin, had the right to certain liberties. Davies had extensive outreach with enslaved people, and he owned two slaves. He discussed with slave owners that enslaved people should be taught literacy and religious education.
- Samuel Davies’s achievements include pioneering the effort to educate Africans, African Americans, and Native Americans, being a hymn writer and poet, and having unmatched orator skills. He won significant legal victories and was called the “Apostle of Dissent.”
- Patrick Henry credited Davies with “teaching me what an orator should be” while Henry worshiped at Polegreen Church with his mother.
- Davies remained in Virginia until 1759 when he accepted the presidency of Princeton University in NJ.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK



- “An interesting stop along the Civil War Trail. The location dates back to the Revolutionary era and has deep roots in religious and political history.” Christina, May 2020
- “Surreal treatment of a historical site. Worth a visit.” Daniel, March 2023
- “We were fortunate enough to have our wedding here. This place is magical.” Juan, October 2017
- “Clean, beautiful, and serene.” Robin, June 2020
- “A slice of heaven with grass, trees, peaceful breezes and a mountain of important American history!” Kristin, March 2016
- “A+ historical site...The role of this church is placed in local, national and international contexts with text and other displays. Whoever did this site really got it right.” David, August 2022
- “Stunning (wedding) venue. The folks that operate Polegreen are so friendly and accommodating. I really can't give them enough praise.” Jonah, December 2022



MOVING
FORWARD

- **Growing outreach**

We look forward to increasing our services and programs through the connection of new community partners.

- **Preserving history**

We honor the trust given to us to protect and maintain the physical structures and historical information that links the lessons of the past to today.

- **Expanding sites and services**

We will create the opportunity for an enhanced site to meet the demand and amplify the community engagement we have developed over the years.

Meet Our Team

DAVID W. FULLER
Board President

ROBERT B. GILES
Board Vice President

G. EVERETT B. REVELEY
Board Secretary

ROBERT F. STROHM
Board Treasurer

LESLIE LUCK
Director of Operations

CATIE L. DEAL
Director of Communications

ROBERT BLUFORD, III
Board Member

MARLA COLEMAN
Board Member

STEPHEN D. ENSIGN
Board Member

F. CLAIBORNE JOHNSTON, JR
Board Member

BRUCE W. OVERTON
Board Member

KENNETH M. PERRY
Board Member

SUZANNE R. PITTMAN
Board Member

HARRY J. WARTHEN, III
Board Member

JENNIFER WOOD
Board Member