



HSF OFFERS SUPPORT FOR REHAB OF HISTORIC ASBURY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

*DIGITAL DOCUMENTATION, TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE HAVE
HELPED THE CHURCH WITH THE MULTI-PHASE INITIATIVE*

SAVANNAH, GA – JUNE 19, 2020 – When Asbury United Methodist Church in Savannah committed over a year ago to the idea of launching a multi-phased initiative to renovate and restore their 150-year-old building as opposed to selling it, the volunteers leading the planning committee knew they had their work cut out for them. Knowing which parts of the aging church to focus on first and learning the structure’s rich history seemed like a logical place to start, so renovation team chairperson Odessa Lovett made research her top priority.

Early on, Lovett’s online research lead her to Ryan Arvay, Historic Savannah Foundation’s *Director of Preservation & Historic Properties*.

“[Arvay] said he’d like to help us because he thought the church was architecturally beautiful and was worth preserving,” Lovett said. “We were happy to hear that because while our overall mission is to preserve, renovate, and improve areas in need of repair within our historic church, we also want to continue being a viable place of worship with a thriving ministry, and a source of support for the community.”

Arvay concurred.

“Yes, the sanctuary is a historic landmark, but it is the congregation that infuses the neighborhood with life. That is just as important to HSF as the brick and mortar...even more so. Preservation is about people,” he said.

Arvay took an immediate interest in the initiative. He advised the church’s committee on ways they could make necessary repairs and improvements to the old building, and encouraged its continued use. He also connected Lovett to the Savannah College of Art & Design’s Preservation Design department.

Under the supervision of professor Sabrinna Cox, SCAD ~~then~~ conducted a preliminary conditions assessment on Asbury United Methodist Church and prepared a presentation to share all their research with Asbury’s renovation team, church members, and the community.

“At the conclusion of that presentation, Ryan [Arvay] suggested that one of the things HSF could do was to connect our church with Shamrock Drones so we could utilize their service to have a more in-depth picture of what the problem-areas are in the [building] as a whole,” Lovett said. “HSF wanted to donate the service so when we start approaching architectural firms and others, we will already have a very strong asset in our arsenal.”

Arvay contacted Ryan Murphy with Shamrock Drones to get the ball rolling. HSF has worked with Shamrock Drones on previous occasions – most recently to create a virtual tour of its Davenport House Museum – and Arvay was confident in the work they’ve done to showcase other historic properties.

Shamrock Drones conducted a 3D digital scan of the entire building, from the attic to the crawl space under the chapel. Those scans were then used to generate floor plans, a 360 degree virtual walk-through tour, and a 3D digital dollhouse view of the entire building. An aerial view of the church captured by drone yielded imagery of surrounding city blocks that extend outside the area of the church itself. To see the footage, please visit <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL1yfPEtBPJiJ7c-nBoVa5nb4289i6co1L>.

"No one has ever documented Asbury like this. The digital resources provided by HSF is a great jumping off point for the congregation as they begin to plan the rehab. It will

assist architects and contractors in understanding the building better and creating estimates for the cost of rehab. Those plans and cost estimates can then be utilized to help the church apply for grants,” Arvay said.

“We got a very strong picture of what needs to be prioritized, what needs to be worked on, and what stages we can do the work in. Now we have prioritized and can complete the renovation and restoration work in stages as we get our funding,” Lovett said.

Asbury's renovation team co-chair Verborah Reeves stated they began the fundraising portion of the multi-phased initiative in earnest in January 2020. Since that time, they have raised nearly \$10,000 to support the renovation/preservation of the church. Right now, their top priority is the roof, which is leaking. More fundraising activities and opportunities will be forthcoming.

In addition to working with HSF and SCAD, Asbury United Methodist Church’s congregation is raising awareness for their multi-phased plan through social media involvement, community outreach, grant applications and doing everything possible to raise funds within the congregation. As they make strides in the right direction, Lovett and Reeves keep Arvay in the loop on their progress. They’ve also partnered with the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation, which has listed Asbury United Methodist Church as one of the 2020 Places in Peril.

Aside from historical aspects, the church has longevity in the community and a staunch support base in terms of family commitments, according to Lovett. But they still have hurdles to overcome.

“We face a challenge in that the congregation is made of elderly members who are on a fixed income, so donating is difficult. We do have a younger generation willing to take the baton as the elders pass it, but when it comes to the renovation, we really need help shining a light on what we’re trying to do and tapping into resources within the community to get us where we need to be,” Lovett said. “Once all the work on the church is complete, we know we’ll have some economic opportunities to take advantage of, such as hosting events, leasing space, conducting tours and holding classes, so we look forward to the future to see what can happen post-renovation.”

Asbury United Methodist Church, pastored by The Rev. Debora Richards, is accepting donations and hopes the community will support their efforts to restore their historic building. Anyone interested in providing a financial gift may do so by mailing checks to:

Asbury United Methodist Church Renovation/Preservation
P.O. Box 60181
Savannah, GA. 31420

The church also accepts donations through Zelle, where its account can be found under the email address Asbury1201Renovation@gmail.com. For more information on Asbury, please go to www.asburyumcsavannah.com or call 912-677-7348.

Historic Savannah Foundation saves buildings, places and stories that define Savannah's past, present, and future. Following its formation in 1955, HSF started a Revolving Fund to save endangered historic properties, now totaling more than 400 buildings throughout several of Savannah's historic districts. HSF has grown into one of the most respected local preservation organizations in the country — emphasizing not only the protection of individual historic buildings but also the revitalization of blighted neighborhoods. HSF demonstrates the cultural, social and economic benefits of preservation as good public policy by proving that preservation and progress go hand-in-hand. To learn more about Historic Savannah Foundation, please visit www.myHSF.org.

-ENDS-

For media inquiries, please contact Hollie Barnidge at hollie@lesleyfrancispr.com or 912-272-8651, Lesley Francis at lesley@lesleyfrancispr.com or 912-429-3950, or the team at 912-417-LFPR (5377).