

For America's 250th, 'Founding Faiths' in Philadelphia Showcases the Role Sacred Places Played in Shaping the Nation

PHILADELPHIA, PA, UNITED STATES, June 3, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- To commemorate the United States Semiquincentennial, Partners for Sacred Places has launched "Founding Faiths: Historic Sacred Places Celebrate America's 250th," a citywide public engagement initiative honoring the historic significance and ongoing community impact of sacred places in America since before the nation's founding. Open through the end of 2026, the initiative invites residents and visitors alike to experience some of Philadelphia's most historically significant and architecturally distinguished structures and interfaith organizations through tours, open houses, educational programming and special events.



Exterior of Arch Street Meeting House

Through the participation of 17 historic congregations — along with Interfaith Philadelphia and The Dialogue Institute — the program highlights how sacred places have long served as hubs for civic engagement, cultural life, education, activism, social services and community gathering. Together, these institutions tell a broader story about the role faith communities have played in shaping American society, advancing social change and strengthening civic life across generations.

"Sacred places are often among the most culturally and historically significant buildings in their communities, but they are far more than spaces for worship and reflection," Partners President Bob Jaeger said. "For centuries, they have served as centers of education, community organizing, cultural expression, services to neighbors in need, and public dialogue. They are repositories of memory, shared values and civic engagement that have helped shape our cities and our nation since long before America's founding.

"As America approaches its 250th anniversary, this initiative creates a rare opportunity to

recognize the foundational contributions these institutions have made to our national story,” Jaeger pointed out. “While this initiative is rooted in Philadelphia — the birthplace of the nation and home base of Partners — we hope it will inspire communities across the country to celebrate the sacred places that have shaped their own histories, identities, missions and civic life.”

As the nation’s only nonsectarian nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening the community-serving capacity of historic sacred places and preserving their significant structures, Partners organized Founding Faiths to underscore the essential role faith-based and interfaith institutions continue to play as civic infrastructure. These spaces serve as places where people gather, learn, organize, celebrate, mourn, solve problems and build stronger communities together. Through exhibitions, performances, storytelling, tours and public programming, the initiative also encourages visitors to engage with difficult chapters of American history and connect past struggles and achievements to contemporary issues and opportunities.

“This initiative also reinforces the enduring power and value of sacred places when they are fully activated through community engagement, cultural programming and public service,” said Partners Executive Vice President Gianfranco Grande. “For generations, these institutions have addressed pressing social issues, supported vulnerable populations, fostered civic dialogue and brought communities together in moments of both challenge and celebration.”

By opening their doors through tours, exhibitions, lectures and special events, participating congregations offer visitors an opportunity not only to experience remarkable architecture and history, but also to better understand difficult moments in America’s past and connect those stories to present-day conversations about community, justice, belonging and the common good.

At press time, participating congregations and organizations include:

Arch Street Meeting House

Christ Church

Congregation Mikveh Israel

Congregation Rodeph Shalom

First Presbyterian Church

First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia

Gloria Dei (Old Swedes’ Church)

Historic African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas

Historic St. George’s United Methodist Church

Interfaith Philadelphia

Mother Bethel AME Church

Old First Reformed UCC

Old Pine Street Church

Old St. Joseph’s Church

Old St. Mary’s Catholic Church

Old Zion Lutheran Church
St. Augustine Catholic Church
St. Peter's Church
The Dialogue Institute

The Founding Faiths website provides information about participating sites, public events and visiting opportunities, with programming and calendar updates continuing throughout 2026. Visitors are encouraged to explore the architecture, artistry, history and living community impact of these historic churches, synagogues and meeting houses.

For more information, visit <https://sacredplaces.org/250th-anniversary/>.

About Partners for Sacred Places: Partners for Sacred Places is the only national nonsectarian nonprofit organization dedicated to helping congregations and communities sustain and actively use historic sacred places for the public good. Through training, research, advocacy and community engagement, Partners works to ensure that sacred places remain vital resources serving neighborhoods and strengthening civic life across the United States.

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