National Fund for Sacred Places to Award More Than $9M to 30 Congregations to Preserve Historic Religious Properties

2026 cohort was selected from 466 applicants and includes the program's first Arkansas grantee.

Exterior of Coral Gables Congregational United Church of Christ. Photo: Congregation.

Interior of First Church of Fayetteville. Photo: Chris Michaels.

PHILADELPHIA, PA, UNITED STATES, October 20, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- PHILADELPHIA, Oct. 20, 2026— Today, the National Fund for Sacred Places awarded 30 historic congregations with capital grants of up to $500,000 each, for a total of over $9 million. The program of Partners for Sacred Places in collaboration with the National Trust for Historic Preservation also provides tailored technical assistance to support good planning, community engagement, and enhanced fundraising.

In its 11th year, the National Fund for Sacred Places, the only national program of its kind, will be providing financial and professional resources to help congregations steward architecturally significant sacred places that serve as community hubs in their regions. To date, the National Fund has awarded or pledged over $42 million to 197 community-serving congregations representing 29 denominations and faith traditions across 46 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. For every $1 invested by the National Fund, participating congregations have raised nearly $5 in additional funding for their projects.

“The 2026 National Fund for Sacred Places congregations embody spirituality, community, and resilience,” said Bob Jaeger, president of Partners for Sacred Places. “Their historic buildings have long histories as civic spaces and community gathering places, and it is our honor to be part of this chapter in their story. This is also the first year we have welcomed a congregation from Arkansas, as the need for sustainable funding sources continues to grow throughout the country.”

As the United States celebrates its 250th anniversary, it is more apparent than ever that houses of worship across the nation have played a crucial role in its history and culture. Many congregations in the National Fund have a tradition of opening their religious buildings to the community, providing social services, childcare, meeting space, and venues for the arts, in addition to maintaining historical and ancestral records that may otherwise be lost.

“Thanks to the strategic and generous investment by Lilly Endowment Inc., the National Trust for Historic Preservation is proud to collaborate with Partners for Sacred Places in awarding over $9 million to 30 historic churches, the largest amount awarded in any National Fund for Sacred Places grant round,” said Brent Leggs, President and CEO of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. “Historic houses of worship have a robust power to shape the identities and values of Americans. They are uniquely significant as places of faith and belonging and stand as cultural landmarks and beacons to communities in times of celebration or hardship. Investing in these congregations ensures that our nation’s diverse religious heritage is preserved and thriving.”

This year 466 congregations submitted applications to the National Fund for Sacred Places program, reflecting the growing need to preserve these buildings as the religious landscape evolves in the United States.

“This diverse cohort of congregations represents the types of stories we need to preserve as part of our national heritage,” said Rachel Hildebrandt, senior director of the National Fund for Sacred Places. “Many of these buildings have played important roles in social change movements that have made our country what it is today. We are deeply committed to supporting the National Fund congregations in restoring and maintaining these community hubs for future generations.”

The National Fund 2026 grantees are:

Berkeley Methodist United Church - Berkeley, CA
Capitol Hill Lutheran Church - Des Moines, IA
Chinese Christian Union Church - Chicago, IL
Coral Gables Congregational United Church of Christ - Coral Gables, FL
Durham Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church - Buffalo, NY
Eureka Christian Church - Eureka, IL
First & Franklin Presbyterian Church - Baltimore, MD

First Baptist Church - Savannah, GA
First Christian Church of Fayetteville - Fayetteville, AR
First United Methodist Church of Germantown - Philadelphia, PA
Foundry United Methodist Church - Washington, DC
Holy Cross United Methodist Church - Reading, PA
Immanuel Lutheran Church - Seattle, WA
La Purísima Socorro Mission - Socorro, TX
New River Presbyterian Church - Philadelphia, PA
North United Methodist Church - Indianapolis, IN
Ocean Avenue Presbyterian Church - San Francisco, CA
Our Lady, Queen of the Most Holy Rosary Cathedral - Toledo, OH
Second Church in Dorchester - Dorchester, MA
St. Mary of the Angels Church - Chicago, IL
St. Dominic Catholic Parish - Denver, CO
St. John's A.M.E. Church - Norfolk, VA
St. John's Episcopal Church - Mt. Pleasant, MI
St. Paul's By-the-Sea Episcopal Church - Ocean City, MD
St. Paul's Episcopal Church - Newburyport, MA
St. Paul's Lutheran Church - Red Wing, MN
Temple Beth El - Birmingham, AL
The Cathedral of All Souls - Asheville, NC
The Parish of St. Charles Borromeo, Resurrection and All Saints - New York, NY
Trinity Lutheran Church of Manhattan - New York, NY

For more information on the National Fund for Sacred Places, including eligibility, program details, and the value of sacred places in communities nationwide, please visit fundforsacredplaces.org. The National Fund for Sacred Places is made possible thanks to the generosity of Lilly Endowment Inc.

About Partners for Sacred Places
Partners for Sacred Places is the only nonsectarian, nonprofit organization dedicated to the sound stewardship and active community use of older sacred places across America. Partners provides a variety of fundraising, building stewardship, space-sharing, and community engagement services through grant-funded programs and consulting so that sacred places can live into the vital roles they play as community assets in their neighborhoods and our wider society. To learn more, visit sacredplaces.org.

About the National Trust for Historic Preservation
The National Trust for Historic Preservation is a privately-funded nonprofit organization dedicated to helping communities maintain and enhance the power of historic places. Chartered by Congress in 1949 and supported by partners, friends, and champions nationwide, we help preserve the places and stories that make communities unique. Through the stewardship and

revitalization of historic sites, we help communities foster economic growth, create healthier environments, and build a stronger, shared sense of civic duty and belonging. SavingPlaces.org

About Lilly Endowment Inc.
Lilly Endowment Inc. is a private foundation created in 1937 by J.K. Lilly Sr. and his sons Eli and J.K. Jr. through gifts of stock in their pharmaceutical business, Eli Lilly and Co. While those gifts remain the financial bedrock of the endowment, it is a separate entity from the company, with a distinct governing board, staff and location. In keeping with the founders' wishes, the endowment supports the causes of community development, education and religion and maintains a special commitment to its hometown, Indianapolis, and home state, Indiana. A principal aim of the endowment's religion grantmaking is to deepen and enrich the lives of Christians in the United States, primarily by seeking out and supporting efforts that enhance the vitality of congregations and strengthen the pastoral and lay leadership of Christian communities. The Endowment also seeks to improve public understanding of diverse religious traditions and lift up in fair, accurate and balanced ways the roles that people of all faiths and various religious communities play in the United State and around the globe. lillyendowment.org

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Miguel Alfonso
malfonso@purposebrand.com
Purpose Brand

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