



**Interfaith[®]
Philadelphia**



**Religious
Freedom:
Then & Now**

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INTERFAITH PHILADELPHIA LAUNCHES *RELIGIOUS FREEDOM: THEN & NOW*

Exploring 250 Years of Interfaith Engagement and Understanding in Philadelphia

PHILADELPHIA, PA (February 11, 2026) — As Philadelphia marks America’s 250th anniversary, [Interfaith Philadelphia](#), a leading organization dedicated to promoting social harmony and inter-religious understanding, is launching [Religious Freedom: Then & Now](#), a year-long public initiative exploring Philadelphia’s central role in shaping religious liberty in the United States—and its relevance today.

During the Semiquincentennial, this initiative will explore Philadelphia’s national role as a model for interfaith understanding through a series of lectures, panel discussions, and workshops hosted by more than a dozen historically significant religious congregations in Old City Philadelphia. The series will ground participants in the city’s foundational stories while inviting reflection on what it means to live in a religiously pluralistic democracy today. The initiative will culminate in a celebratory event at the National Constitution Center in December 2026.

Additional components include the **Religious Freedom Walk**, a self-guided walking tour; the **Passport to Understanding**, a free educational guide; and a range of in-person and virtual programming highlighting the contemporary and dynamic role of faith communities in our region.

The year’s first program, [The Black Religious Experience in the Colonial Period](#), will take place on February 22 from 1:00–3:00 pm at Mother Bethel AME Church. It is free and open to the public. Hosted in partnership with Mother Bethel AME Church—the oldest African Methodist Episcopal Church in the nation—and The African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas, the first African Episcopal congregation in the country, this program features a panel of historical experts exploring the rich, complex religious lives of Black Philadelphians during the Revolutionary War era. [See our website for all events and programs.](#)

“This initiative uplifts the voices of Philadelphia’s historic and contemporary faith communities, creating space for reflection, learning, and connection across differences,” said Abby Stamelman Hocky, Executive Director of Interfaith Philadelphia. “In these challenging times, when religious freedom is often misunderstood or contested, *Religious Freedom: Then & Now* invites us to

examine our past with honesty, engage our present with care, and imagine a more just and inclusive future.”

Program Highlights:

- ***Religious Freedom Then & Now Programs:*** A series of programs throughout the year, at 12 historically significant partner locations in Old City Philadelphia that connect the origin stories of many of the city’s earliest houses of worship. **Look out for *Religious Freedom Walk* banners displayed at each site!**
- ***Religious Freedom Walk:*** A self-guided walking tour of 12+ historically significant religious institutions in Old City Philadelphia that connect the origin stories of many of the city’s earliest houses of worship. The Dialogue Institute’s [Religious Freedom Trails App](#), offers residents and tourists historic information about each site, and uncovers stories of Protestant Christians, Catholics, Jews, Free Thinkers, Deists, Muslims, and others who were present during the founding period.
- ***Passport to Understanding***®: A creative resource to help residents and tourists reflect on practices that help to meaningfully engage with people of diverse expressions or faith, and foster connections across lines of difference. FREE copies are available at the Philadelphia Visitors Center (1 N. Independence Mall West, Philadelphia, PA) and at all participating partner locations beginning next week.

More information about upcoming programs and events will be announced throughout the year. To learn more, go to: interfaithphiladelphia.org/religious-freedom-then-now

Participating Congregation Sites

African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas
Arch Street Friends Meeting
Christ Church
Congregation Mikveh Israel
Gloria Dei (Old Swedes’) Episcopal Church
Historic St. George’s Methodist Church
Mother Bethel AME Church
Old Pine Street Presbyterian Church
Old St. Joseph’s Church
St. Augustine Roman Catholic Church
St. Mary’s Roman Catholic Church
St. Peter’s Episcopal Church

About Interfaith Philadelphia

Interfaith Philadelphia, equips individuals and communities for interfaith engagement, builds collaborative relationships, and stands in solidarity with our diverse neighbors. Since 2004, Interfaith Philadelphia has challenged Philadelphians to dare to understand one another, building

our region as one that reflects the vibrancy of a religiously diverse democracy, in which all people are valued, distinctive traditions are welcomed, and people of diverse backgrounds collaborate to shape a just and compassionate society. Follow us on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

Interfaith Philadelphia is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization located in South Kensington, 100 W. Oxford Street, Suite E-1300, Philadelphia PA 19122