

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Hartford's Oldest Church Selected for National Grant-Making Program

Hartford, Connecticut (November 4, 2016) — Just days after the First Church of Christ celebrated its 384th anniversary, the oldest church in Hartford has been selected to participate in a national grant-making program. The church will receive a planning grant and in-kind professional services leading to the opportunity to access up to \$250,000 in capital grants.

The award comes as part of an unprecedented \$14 million National Fund for Sacred Places announced by Partners for Sacred Places and the National Trust for Historic Preservation to assist aging churches in need of repair and restoration. The Fund will provide up to \$250,000 in capital grants, in addition to planning grants and an array of services, for at least 50 individual congregations from a diversity of faiths over four years.

"We are so very grateful," says Reverend Damaris Whittaker, who explains that the church's meetinghouse is in dire need of repair thanks to near-constant use by the congregation and community. "From AA meetings to classes for the indigent to addressing food insecurity head on, this church is and has long been a necessary part of this neighborhood. And finding funding for the brick-and-mortar aspects of a church has become more and more difficult. We can't really provide the services that we provide unless we can maintain the buildings in which they are housed."

Center Church was selected as a Fund participant due to their significant history as one of the oldest institutions in Connecticut, with several governors laid to rest in the burial grounds. Yet the congregation has also remained dedicated to the city of Hartford and continues to thrive today.

"We are enthusiastic about the visionary leadership at Center Church, and recognize the congregation's commitment to positive community impact," says Chad Martin, Director of the National Fund.

The National Fund for Sacred Places is a collaboration that builds on Partners for Sacred Places' decades of work helping churches use best stewardship practices with their historic facilities in order to strengthen, serve and celebrate their communities for the common good. The National Trust for Historic Preservation is the nation's leading preservation organization with 60 years of advocacy and grant-making to preserve America's diverse history.

The Fund was launched with two grants totaling nearly \$14 million from the Indiana-based Lilly Endowment Inc. Through this initiative, \$10 million will be disbursed for capital improvements, with the remainder used for planning, technical assistance, coaching and program oversight.

More information, including contact information and high-resolution images, is available from Chad Martin, Director of the National Fund. Details about the application process, eligibility requirements and selection criteria are available by visiting www.fundforsacredplaces.org. Applications are now being accepted for the next round of grants, which will be awarded in the fall of 2017.

About Partners for Sacred Places

Partners for Sacred Places is the only national, nonsectarian, nonprofit organization dedicated to the sound stewardship and active community use of America's older religious properties. www.sacredplaces.org

About The National Trust for Historic Preservation

The National Trust for Historic Preservation, a privately-funded nonprofit organization, works to save America's historic places. www.savingplaces.org

For more information contact:

Chad Martin

Partners for Sacred Spaces [215-567-3432](tel:215-567-3432), x19 (office)

[717-669-7372](tel:717-669-7372) (mobile)