



## The White House Historical Association Hosts Annual Symposium

*“Faith, Freedom, and Democracy” Event Held in Partnership with  
Westminster Abbey Institute*

**May 4, 2026 (Washington, D.C.)** – The White House Historical Association, in partnership with Westminster Abbey Institute, hosted the Faith, Freedom, and Democracy Symposium on Friday, May 1, 2026, at the historic Decatur House. That evening, the Association and St. John’s Church, in honor of America’s 250th, hosted *An Evening with The Choir of Westminster Abbey*.

[See high-resolution images of the 2026 Symposium](#)

This year’s program explored the role of faith in American society from its colonial roots under the Anglican Church to embrace of religious diversity and political freedom beyond the American Revolution. The event highlighted spiritual, cultural, intellectual, and diplomatic exchanges between the United States and the United Kingdom, and how faith shaped early Washington, D.C. and the presidency. The day included a keynote address, “Faith and Freedom in Revolutionary America,” as well as the following panel discussions: “Faith in Early Washington, D.C.,” “Renewing Faith in Public Life,” and “Faith and the Early Presidency.”

The 2026 symposium schedule and [speakers](#) included:

### **Welcome**

- Mr. Stewart D. McLaurin, President, The White House Historical Association
- The Reverend Dr. James Hawkey, Canon Theologian of Westminster Abbey and Chair, Westminster Abbey Institute

### **Faith and Freedom in Revolutionary America**

- Introduction: Dr. Matthew R. Costello, Chief Education Officer and Director of the David M. Rubenstein National Center for White House History, The White House Historical Association

- Dr. Andrew Jackson O’Shaughnessy, Professor, University of Virginia and Visiting Research Fellow at the Rothermere American Institute at Oxford

### **Faith in Early Washington, D.C.**

- Moderator: Mr. Stewart D. McLaurin, President, The White House Historical Association
- The Reverend Canon Jan N. Cope, Provost, National Cathedral
- The Reverend Robert W. Fisher, Rector, St. John’s Church
- Dr. Erika Gault D. Gault, Director of Center for the Study of African American Religious Life and the Lily Endowment Curator of African American Religious History, Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture
- Archbishop William E. Lori, Archdiocese of Baltimore

### **Renewing Faith in Public Life**

- Moderator: Dr. Matthew R. Costello, Chief Education Officer and Director of the David M. Rubenstein National Center for White House History, The White House Historical Association
- The Very Reverend Dr. David Hoyle KCVO MBE, Dean of Westminster
- Dr. Robert Thompson, Deputy Director, Westminster Abbey Institute
- Dr. Edge Watchorn, Director, Westminster Abbey Institute

### **Lunch Program**

- Opening: Mr. Stewart D. McLaurin, President, The White House Historical Association
- Prayer of Grace: The Reverend Robert W. Fisher, Rector, St. John’s Church
- Remarks: The Reverend Dr. James Hawkey, Canon Theologian of Westminster Abbey and Chair, Westminster Abbey Institute
- Remarks: The Honorable John F.W. Rogers, Chairman of the Board of Directors, The White House Historical Association
- Special Message: Mr. James Roscoe MVO, Deputy Head of Mission, British Embassy Washington
- Closing: Mr. Stewart McLaurin, President, The White House Historical Association

### **Faith and the Early Presidency**

- Moderator: Dr. Matthew R. Costello, Chief Education Officer and Director of the David M. Rubenstein National Center for White House History, The White House Historical Association
- Mr. C.W. Goodyear, Author and Historian
- Dr. Mary V. Thompson, Author and Historian
- Dr. Ronald C. White, American Historian and Biographer

### **Closing Remarks**

- Mr. Stewart D. McLaurin, President, The White House Historical Association

For more information about this event, contact [press@whha.org](mailto:press@whha.org).

### **About the White House Historical Association**

Founded in 1961 by First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy, the White House Historical Association is the nonprofit, nonpartisan organization entrusted with preserving and sharing the history of the White House. Supported entirely by private philanthropy and the sale of educational books and products, the Association reaches millions of students, teachers, and lifelong learners through research and scholarship initiatives, public programming, and the authoritative titles published by its independent press. Throughout each presidency, the Association works with the Offices of the First Lady and the White House Curator to acquire and preserve historic objects for the White House Fine and Decorative Arts Collection. The Association also operates The People's House: A White House Experience, a free, immersive, educational museum in Washington, D.C., which welcomes hundreds of thousands of visitors annually. To learn more about the White House Historical Association, please visit [WhiteHouseHistory.org](http://WhiteHouseHistory.org).

### **About Westminster Abbey Institute**

Westminster Abbey Institute aims to nurture and revitalise moral and spiritual values in public life and service. It seeks to replenish and sustain public servants of all faiths and none, and to celebrate and animate public service as a force for good. The Institute draws on Westminster Abbey's resources of spirituality and theological learning, rooted in its daily worshipping life and broader Christian tradition, to convene discussion, nourish reflection and inspire regeneration.

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