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**Commander Billie J. Farrell to Receive Third Lantern Award at Old North Church & Historic Site
77th Commander and 1st Female Leader of USS Constitution Honored for Sparking Change**

BOSTON – “One if by land, and two if by sea.” On Thursday, April 11, Old North Illuminated will honor Commander Billie J. Farrell, the 77th Commander of USS Constitution, with the Third Lantern Award at Lanterns & Luminaries, a commemoration and reenactment of the famous lantern signal at the Old North Church that illuminated the path to the American Revolution.

Kicking off Patriot’s Day weekend, the event celebrates the leadership, courage, hope, tenacity, and active citizenship of the two patriots who held aloft two lanterns in Old North Church’s steeple at the instruction of Paul Revere, and all of those – past and present – who actively work toward a more perfect union. The Third Lantern, presented to Old North Church and lit by President Gerald Ford in 1975 to start the nation’s Bicentennial, symbolizes the hope that the ideals of this nation would continue to light the way into our third century.

For decades, Boston residents and community leaders have gathered at Old North Church every April to commemorate the anniversary of the lantern signal and the brave acts that made them possible. Cmdr. Farrell is the 2024 recipient of the national landmark’s Third Lantern Award for her work breaking down barriers and strengthening the legacy of USS Constitution, the world’s oldest commissioned warship afloat and America’s ship of state, by sharing its centuries-long history and telling the Navy story. She exemplifies the values reflected in Old North’s famous signal lanterns and will serve as the event’s keynote speaker.

“Our vision is a future in which everyone will see their stories, struggles, and hopes reflected in places of prominence and our shared history,” says Nikki Stewart, Executive Director of Old North Illuminated, which operates Old North Church & Historic Site. “Our mission is to inspire active citizenship and courageous, compassionate leadership by interpreting and preserving the Old North Church. Cmdr. Farrell truly exemplifies this work as she is a history maker who follows in the footsteps of trailblazing women who became firsts but not lasts. She is a remarkable leader who demonstrates courageous and compassionate leadership every day.”

Since graduating from the Naval Academy in 2004, Cmdr. Farrell has dedicated her 20-year career to national service; deploying multiple times to ships stationed in the Baltic and Red Sea regions. In 2022, the mother of two became the first woman to command USS Constitution. In this role, she works to preserve the 1812 sailing culture while ensuring her active-duty crew of 80 members is prepared to serve in the 21st century. While dressed in 19th century captains’ attire, one of her favorite parts of the job is interacting with the thousands of visitors who board the ship annually. The questions asked by young guests challenge her the most as she connects the stories of USS Constitution’s past to their daily lives.

“I first visited Old North Church & Historic Site as a child with my family during our walk along the famous Freedom Trail,” says Cmdr. Farrell, a Kentuckian who proudly shares she married a Peabody, Mass. native who she met at the Naval Academy. “Since then, I have had many chances to visit the historic site, including a chance to pay respects to Captain Samuel Nicholson, the first commander of USS Constitution, who attended Old North Church and is buried in the below crypt. While Old North and USS Constitution represent a different time in our nation’s history, the lessons through their stories are still applicable today. There is no future without our past. I’m humbled to receive this honor.”

Lanterns & Luminaries will be an uplifting evening featuring festive music; a reading of the poem “Paul Revere’s Ride” by Jazzmin Bonner and Jess Meyer of Plays in Place, who produced the play *Revolution’s Edge* at Old North Church; a keynote provided by Cmdr. Farrell, and Old North Illuminated Executive Director Nikki Stewart’s

OLD NORTH CHURCH & HISTORIC SITE



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reflections on the role of active citizenship in the ongoing struggle for justice and equity. The event will conclude with the ceremonial lighting and hanging of two lanterns in Old North's iconic steeple as a beacon of liberty, tenacity, and hope with a reception to follow.

This year's celebration will be held from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. at Old North Church & Historic Site, located at 193 Salem Street in Boston. Proceeds will support Old North Illuminated's virtual and on-site programs, which aim to inspire children and adults alike to consider the ways in which they can build a more just and equitable world. Individual tickets range from \$60 to \$200 and must be purchased in advance. To register, visit:

www.oldnorth.com/lanterns/

About Old North Illuminated / Old North Church & Historic Site

Established in 1991 as the Old North Foundation, Old North Illuminated is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that is responsible for historic site operations and interpretative, educational, and preservation programs at the iconic Old North Church & Historic Site. A secular organization that is independent of Christ Church in the City of Boston, Old North Illuminated welcomes approximately 500,000 visitors annually while overseeing the preservation of an enduring symbol of American independence. Old North Illuminated serves a wide audience by creating meaningful experiences through educational outreach, site-specific programming, and historical analysis. ONI works collaboratively with the City of Boston, the U.S. National Park Service, the Freedom Trail Foundation, and other partners to foster educational and interpretive programs for students and visitors while engaging the public in Old North Church's history and its role in inspiring liberty and freedom. In 2023, Old North Church & Historic Site was designated as a Site of Conscience by the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC), joining a global network of historic sites, museums, and memory initiatives that connect past struggles to today's movements for human rights. For more information, visit: www.oldnorth.com.

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