



2023 Annual Report

Dear History Lovers,

Visitors come to Old North Church for many occasions: a much-anticipated vacation, a field trip that brings children out of the classroom, or perhaps an exploration of the city from a fresh perspective. We welcomed 198,705 guests in 2023, a substantial increase from pre-pandemic visitation of 159,487 in 2019. Each stepped outside the day-to-day to make memories. That's why Old North Illuminated (ONI) invested in programming, preservation, and partnerships in 2023 that will serve our guests for years to come.

Public history - which refers to the many ways in which history is explored and engaged with outside of the classroom - has the greatest impact when it is accessible and inclusive. We now incorporate accessible design into our new permanent exhibit, offer interpretation in multiple languages, and provide access to large-print materials and audio files. Our visitors' experience has become easier and more comfortable.

Inclusion is deeply intertwined with accessibility. At ONI, inclusive history is honest, objective, and makes room for multiple stories and perspectives. We invest in new research to recover overlooked narratives and bring together facts from multiple sources that illuminate entirely new aspects of Old North's history. Then we bring that research and those stories to our visitors. Our efforts were rewarded with a Preservation Achievement Award from the Boston Preservation Alliance for our *Illuminating the Unseen* web series. The new programming detailed in the following pages invites everyone to find relevance at Old North Church & Historic Site.

Preserving Old North Church, along with its surrounding buildings and gardens, is an ongoing effort that often sparks widespread interest. The 11-month restoration of Old North's historic crypt, managed by the National Park Service, received extensive press coverage and allowed for exciting archaeological discoveries. The Washington Garden has been transformed into a beautiful outdoor gathering and learning space with shade and seating for those hot summer days. Other projects such as roof repairs, masonry repointing, and the replacement of a boiler are less glamorous but equally critical.

In July of 2026, the nation will come together in celebration of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. At Old North, our milestone comes early, with the 250th anniversary of those fateful lantern signals to be commemorated in April 2025. Old North Church & Historic Site was recently designated as a Site of Conscience by the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, a global network helping historic sites connect past struggles to today's movements for human rights and social justice. We are excited to bring this lens to our anniversary programming and revelry.

We hope that this annual report inspires you to visit Old North Church in 2024, tune in to *Illuminating the Unseen* from your living room, or deepen your philanthropic commitment to ONI.

With gratitude,



NIKKI STEWART
Executive Director, Old North Illuminated



MADELEINE RODRIGUEZ
Board Chair, Old North Illuminated



NEW Exhibit and Audio Guide



In 2020, Old North Illuminated adopted a new strategic plan and a new vision: a future in which everyone will see their stories, struggles, and hopes reflected in places of prominence and our shared American history. This vision led us in 2023 to tell a broader and more inclusive history at Old North Church with the creation of a new permanent exhibit in our sanctuary, *Sparking Revolutions: Lanterns, Leadership, and the Evolving Legacy of Old North Church*, an accompanying audio guide, and a new guided tour: “The Balcony: Hidden Histories”. All of this programming draws on new research conducted by Dr. Jaimie D. Crumley of the University of Utah, who spent a year combing through Old North’s archives to uncover the stories of the church’s early Black and Indigenous congregants.

Sparking Revolutions engages visitors through a series of panels in Old North’s unique box pews. They weave together the story of the lantern signals, the church’s construction and architecture, historical context about life in colonial Boston, and profiles of congregants from different racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. The exhibit incorporates accessible design elements, including high-contrast colors and easy-to-read font, to better serve visitors with differing abilities. The development of *Sparking Revolutions* was funded by the Yawkey Foundation.

The new audio guide, available in English and Spanish, serves as a bridge between the exhibit and the “Hidden Histories” tour and examines the church’s prominent role in the American Revolution alongside its paradoxical ties to enslavement and colonialism. This project was funded by The Lynch Foundation and the Richard and Susan Smith Family Foundation.

“I’ve done the Freedom Trail circuit about once per decade for the past 60 years and we almost skipped the church because of that. I’m so glad we went and so appreciate the inclusion of ‘hard history.’ We were inspired from there to do the Black Heritage Trail, African American Museum, and the Athenaeum exhibit about Harriet Bell Hayden. And inspired now to follow up with related reading and videos. She and I appreciated the difficult challenge of taking sacred and beloved narratives, deeply rooted in our national DNA and resistant to any alteration, and rounding them out through including painful but equally fascinating inclusive narratives. Thank you for the effort in telling these stories. We loved it!”

— A mother and daughter visited Old North Church from California and reflected on the new gallery tour.



“We loved it!”



Captain John Pulling, Jr. (Evan Turissini) seeks information from Cato (Nathan Johnson).

REVOLUTION'S *EDGE*

PHOTOS BY NILE SCOTT STUDIOS

“Sometimes we look back in history and we feel like it was easy for them to make their choices,”

said Patrick Gabridge, the producing artistic director of Plays in Place. “There is a narrative of, ‘It was so much simpler back then.’ But when we look at people from the past as real, complex humans, we realize that just like us, they didn’t know what was going to happen next.”



The Rev. Dr. Mather Byles, Jr. (Brooks Reeves) warns Captain Pulling (Evan Turissini).

This feeling of uncertainty looms large over *Revolution’s Edge*, the original play written by Gabridge, produced by Plays in Place, commissioned by Old North Illuminated, and staged at Old North Church. The gripping historical drama ran for 14 weeks in the summer of 2023, garnering rave reviews from audiences and critics alike, and press coverage in *AP News*, *Boston.com*, *WBUR’s Radio Boston*, and *WGBH’s Boston Public Radio*.

Revolution’s Edge takes audiences back to the afternoon of April 18, 1775, hours before Paul Revere’s lanterns would shine from Old North’s steeple as a warning to Patriot forces that British troops were headed to Lexington and Concord “by sea” across the Charles River. With war on the horizon, Old North’s Loyalist rector, the Rev. Dr. Mather Byles, Jr., is pushed to “resign” his post. As Byles and Cato (an African man enslaved by Byles) prepare to leave the church for the final time, they encounter Capt. John Pulling, Jr., a prominent member of the church congregation, ardent Patriot, and friend of Paul Revere. These three men share a faith but have very different beliefs concerning the right path ahead for themselves, their families, and the colonies. Their

conversation explores the intersection of faith and freedom on the edge of the American Revolution.

Patrick Gabridge spent six months researching the lives of the Rev. Dr. Byles, Capt. Pulling, and Cato, diving into archival documents to pull out biographical details that would turn these historical figures into three-dimensional characters. "It was easy to find material about Byles, harder to find much about Pulling, and there was very little about Cato," said Gabridge. "A throughline I found for all three characters was that they were fathers of young children who had experienced profound loss."

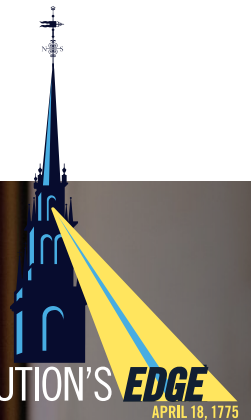
Nathan Johnson, the actor who portrayed Cato, reflected that *Revolution's Edge* was one of the most meaningful projects he has participated in. Early in his acting career, Johnson had vowed that he would never play an enslaved person. However, when he read the script and considered the complex character of Cato and the play's message, the role was too significant to turn down. "I want everyone to see that we all have something to contribute to our history," said Johnson.

For audiences, *Revolution's Edge* was a unique and immersive experience staged in Old North's sanctuary

where conversations like those depicted in the play actually took place nearly 250 years ago. "Sitting in those pews in that church gave me goosebumps; I felt our history alive around me," wrote Joyce Kulhawik, a Boston arts critic. Kulhawik saw the present reflected in the past, writing, "The resonance in our own day is haunting as our country stands perilously divided over race, politics, faith, and gender – with the very democracy conceived in 1775 now at stake."

Alexandra Smith, the director of *Revolution's Edge*, notes that historical fiction can shine a spotlight on the ordinary people who may not have made it into our history textbooks. While history tomes record the deeds of powerful figures like presidents and generals, simple actions that went unrecognized can still reverberate through the centuries. Smith hopes that the play reminds audiences that "We are not footnotes or omissions from the text; we are active participants in shaping history."

Revolution's Edge will return to Old North Church in 2024, running Wednesday through Saturday from June 7 through August 10 at 6pm.



Scan the QR code to
WATCH THE TRAILER



Cato (Nathan Johnson) contemplates leaving Old North and parting ways with his family.

PRESERVING *OLD NORTH*

Restoring Gruchy's Angels



In December of 2023, Manzi Appraisers & Restoration completed a three-month restoration of Old North Church's approximately 400-year-old carved wooden angels. The four Baroque figures date to the 1620s and were likely carved in what is now Belgium. In 1746, the statues were on board a French ship en route to a Catholic church in Quebec, when the ship was captured and pillaged by a British privateer, Captain Thomas Gruchy. A congregant of Old North, Captain Gruchy donated the four angels to the church.

Manzi Appraisers & Restoration took the two-foot-tall angel statues to their lab to complete their work, which included cleaning, minor infill, and painting. While all four angels once held trumpets in their hands, over the centuries, two of the angels lost their instruments. As part of the restoration, the Manzi team fabricated new trumpets for the angels with missing instruments and painted them to look timeworn like their historic counterparts. The restored angels look so good, you would never know that they are four centuries old!

The restoration was made possible in part by The Society of Colonial Wars in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and The General Society of Colonial Wars.



Crypt Restoration Project



This extensive preservation project included archeological analysis of the crypt's 37 tombs, repointing of brickwork, and lowering of the floor on the south side of the crypt to install a ramp for those with mobility challenges. After eleven months, the \$1M+ restoration project concluded in October of 2023.

A highlight of the project was the restoration of the original wooden doors on several of the tombs, which had been hidden behind plaster. Richard Leiter, the owner of Revived Furniture and Home Decor in Londonderry, NH, restored the doors by cutting out rotted parts and replacing them with period wood, carefully cleaning the doors, and adding coats of lacquer to preserve them for years to come.

The crypt restoration project was managed by Knollmeyer Building Corp. and made possible with partnership from the National Park Service, the Freedom Trail® Foundation, and many other generous supporters.



Scan the QR code to
LEARN MORE!



Classroom Programming and Field Trips

Education is at the heart of what we do. We support educators across the country by developing curricula that take a fresh look at the past and spark honest dialogue about the nation's complex origins, its founding ideals, and the pursuit of liberty and justice for all. During the 2023–2024 school year, these classroom resources were used by 12,232 students across 43 states.

As part of our efforts to expand our audience, Associate Director of Education Emily Spence presented at the College Board's AP Annual Conference in the summer of 2023. Her presentation focused on ONI's approach to examining a single commodity – chocolate – to teach the colonial economy and its reliance on enslaved labor. The conference introduced ONI to many passionate teachers from across the country and resulted in an additional 1,200 students using the *Cacao and Colonial Chocolate* curriculum in the 2023–2024 school year.

In August 2023, we introduced a new digital resource, *The Old North Teacher Guide*. This versatile tool has the flexibility for use with pre-visit or post-visit activities for Old North Church field trips, or as a stand-alone activity by classrooms and homeschool students across the country. *The Old North Teacher Guide* explores the many aspects of Old North through lessons and activities for students in grades K–12. Activities cover various subjects, including arts and STEM, and teach important skills such as interpreting primary sources, organizing data, and constructing an argument.

Looking ahead, our award-winning web series, *Illuminating the Unseen*, will include a classroom discussion guide for the 2024–2025 school year. To learn more, use the QR code to watch Episode 8 — “Paul Revere’s Ride and the Mark of Urban Slavery” — and then consider the following questions:

- Consider what you know of Paul Revere and Mark. How are their stories similar and how are they different?
- What do you think about Revere’s reference to Mark in his retelling of his historic ride?
- What places in your community have names whose origins you have overlooked?



“When I walk into Old North and we sit in its 300-year-old pews, I can’t help but think about the huge range of people who came before us — Loyalists, revolutionaries, enslavers, free Black people, newly minted Americans. We bring students here to open up a conversation with the past. Immersed in this special place, outside of the classroom, they start asking questions and history turns into something real and important that connects with their lives.”

— Traci Walker Griffith, Executive Director, Eliot School



Scan the QR code to
WATCH THE EPISODE





LANTERNS & LUMINARIES

“The stories we tell ourselves about how we began – and how we have progressed over the years – are what we have used as the glue to hold us, however imperfectly, together.”

Annette Gordon-Reed, *Lanterns & Luminaries* 2023 Honoree

Jonathan Chu, Vice Chair of the Old North Illuminated Board of Directors, presents Annette Gordon-Reed with the Third Lantern Award.

Lanterns & Luminaries gave us a special evening of commemoration, inspiration, and celebration on April 20, 2023. Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Annette Gordon-Reed accepted the annual Third Lantern Award. Guests enjoyed a rousing reading of the poem “Paul Revere’s Ride” from Emmy Award-winning news anchor and reporter Susan Tran, and we blew out the candles on a birthday cake in honor of Old North Church’s 300th anniversary.

In Professor Gordon-Reed’s keynote address from Old North Church’s pulpit, she spoke about growing up in Texas and learning about the “two if by sea” lanterns that hung in our steeple: “Even though I was thousands of miles away, I felt connected to the history that was made in this place because it was an origin story for the beginning of my country.”

She reminded us why the stories that connect us as Americans are so important. While other countries have a culture and institutions that developed over millennia, as a young country, the United States relies upon national stories. “The stories we tell ourselves about how we began – and how we have progressed over the years – are what we have used as the glue to hold us, however imperfectly, together.”

Lanterns & Luminaries celebrates the legacy of two patriots who risked everything to hang those fateful signal lanterns. However, their story is just one of countless inflection points throughout our nation’s history, moments in which “regular” people made bold and brave choices to stand up and speak out. Through the stories of well-known change-makers like Frederick Douglass and Eleanor Roosevelt and oft-overlooked local leaders like Massasoit and Melnea Cass, history inspires us to be courageous, persistent, and hopeful. Who inspires you?



Scan the QR code to
WATCH THE VIDEO!



LET HISTORY ***LIGHT THE WAY***

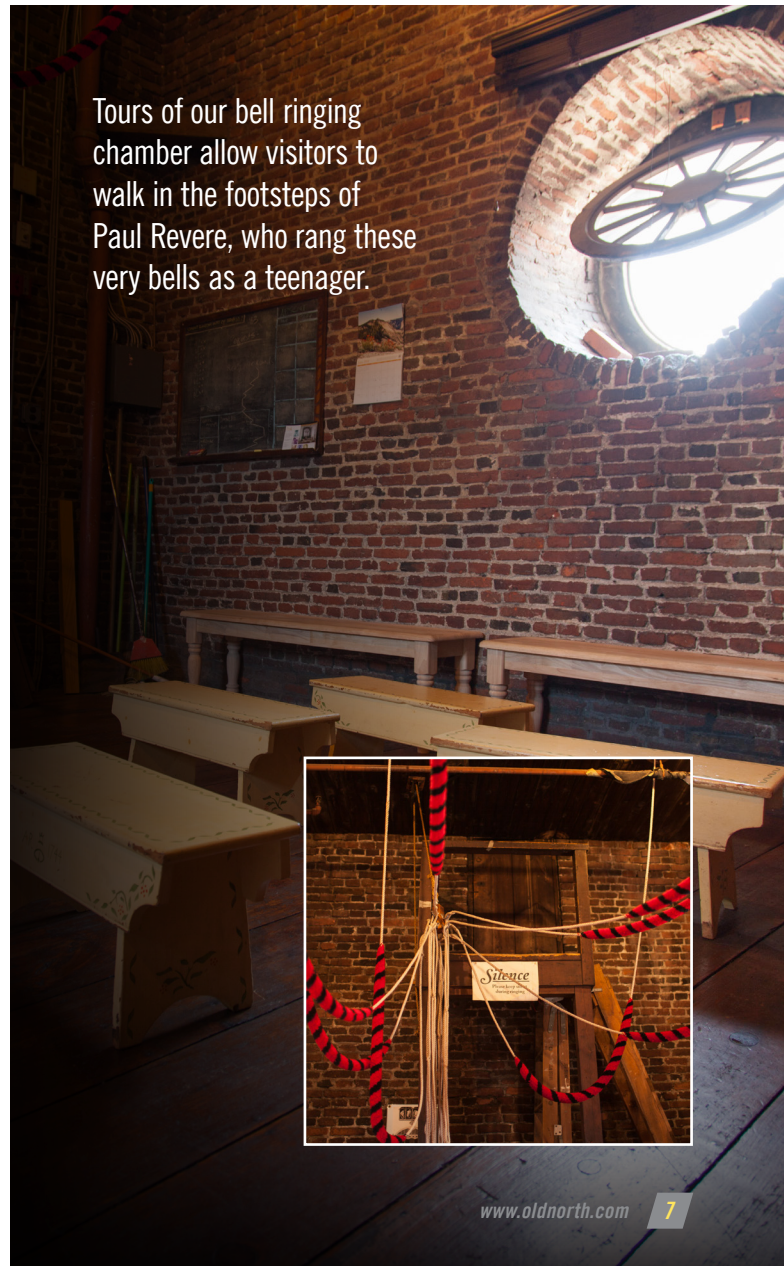
The American identity is as unfinished as the American experiment, constantly shifting, depending on who defines it and whose voices are centered in the discussion. As we approach the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence in July of 2026, now is the time to look back on our nation's complex origins and founding ideals to explore big questions: What does it mean to be an American? How can we balance patriotism with a desire to do and be better? And, how can a deeper understanding of our shared national history help us bridge cultural divides?

Several treasured artifacts, including a bust of George Washington once admired by the Marquis de Lafayette, have been restored for visitors to enjoy.



At Old North Illuminated, we are planning for our own milestone – the 250th anniversary of those fateful lanterns – in April of 2025. Most known for that one moment in time, Old North Church tells a story of Patriots who risked everything to create a nation governed “of, by, and for” the people. But it goes further. Old North is a microcosm of America as an unfinished work: an icon of liberty funded in part by slavery, a symbol of democracy where people worshipped according to social hierarchy, a 300-year-old community set in a neighborhood where successive waves of immigrants have come to pursue the American dream. We are excited to welcome visitors to Old North Church & Historic Site during these special years and help them connect the past to the present, and to the future.

Tours of our bell ringing chamber allow visitors to walk in the footsteps of Paul Revere, who rang these very bells as a teenager.



Illuminating the Unseen, our web series that explores Black and Indigenous history at Old North Church, will be accompanied with a conversation guide for classrooms across the country.



The Year in Numbers

Old North Illuminated Statement of Financial Position for December 31, 2023 and December 31, 2022

The Statement of Financial Position for December 31, 2023 reflects the completion of several major capital projects with the majority of funding raised in previous years. This work includes the replacement of a boiler, roof repairs, artifact restoration, the design of campus-wide accessibility improvements, and the restoration of Old North Church's 37-tomb historic crypt. These projects represent both an investment in the preservation of the historic site and enhancements to the visitor experience that will increase ticketing revenue for years to come.

Assets	2023	2022
Current Assets:		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 1,259,351	\$ 1,844,457
Current portion of grants and contributions receivable	79,666	79,451
Inventory	77,090	75,401
Prepaid expenses and other current assets	23,429	14,288
Total current assets	1,439,536	2,013,597
Other Assets:		
Investments	1,140,485	1,035,833
Grants and Contributions Receivable, net	50,000	100,000
Cash Surrender Value of Life Insurance	—	70,162
Operating Lease Right-of-Use Asset	160,896	212,917
Property and Equipment, net	2,157,149	1,885,061
Total assets	\$ 4,948,066	\$ 5,317,570
Liabilities and Net Assets		
Current Liabilities:		
Current portion of long-term debt	\$ 3,207	\$ 61,685
Accounts payable	41,185	76,533
Accrued expenses	14,951	18,670
Current portion of operating lease liability	59,227	34,008
Total current liabilities	118,570	190,896
Other Liabilities:		
Operating Lease Liability, net of current portion	146,669	203,909
Long-term Debt, net	146,793	146,891
Total liabilities	412,032	541,696
Net Assets:		
Without donor restrictions:		
Operating	(8,557)	273,157
Board designated	379,139	501,049
Property and equipment	2,096,040	1,801,485
Total without donor restrictions	2,466,622	2,575,691
With donor restrictions	2,069,412	2,200,183
Total net assets	4,536,034	4,775,874
Total liabilities and net assets	\$ 4,948,066	\$ 5,317,570

The Lantern Society

Lantern Society Members are partners, supporters, and advocates who support the mission of Old North Illuminated with an annual gift of \$1,000 or more.

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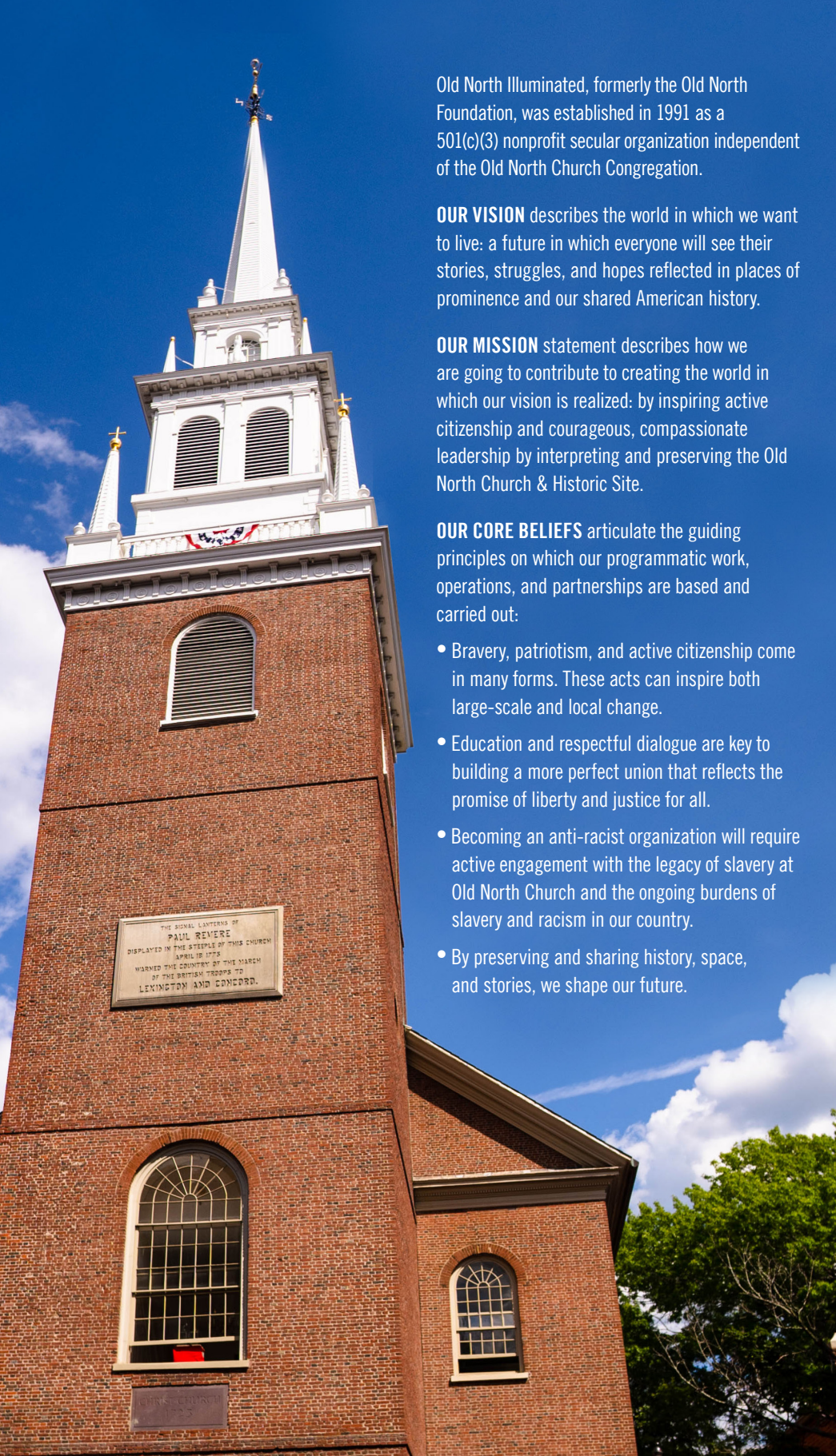
We make every effort to maintain accurate records. Should you notice an error, please contact development@oldnorth.com.

Old North Illuminated (formerly "Old North Foundation") is a 501(c)(3) exempt organization. Our EIN number is 04-3120688. Gifts can be made via check, credit card, stock transfers, or Donor Advised Funds. To learn more, contact Nikki Stewart, Executive Director, at 617-513-5999 or nstewart@oldnorth.com.

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Old North Illuminated, formerly the Old North Foundation, was established in 1991 as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit secular organization independent of the Old North Church Congregation.

OUR VISION describes the world in which we want to live: a future in which everyone will see their stories, struggles, and hopes reflected in places of prominence and our shared American history.

OUR MISSION statement describes how we are going to contribute to creating the world in which our vision is realized: by inspiring active citizenship and courageous, compassionate leadership by interpreting and preserving the Old North Church & Historic Site.

OUR CORE BELIEFS articulate the guiding principles on which our programmatic work, operations, and partnerships are based and carried out:

- Bravery, patriotism, and active citizenship come in many forms. These acts can inspire both large-scale and local change.
- Education and respectful dialogue are key to building a more perfect union that reflects the promise of liberty and justice for all.
- Becoming an anti-racist organization will require active engagement with the legacy of slavery at Old North Church and the ongoing burdens of slavery and racism in our country.
- By preserving and sharing history, space, and stories, we shape our future.

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Kyra DeStefano
Retail Operations Manager

Jason Fishman
Marketing and Communications Manager

Julius James
Visitor Experience Manager

Catherine Matthews
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