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Lanterns & Luminaries Launches America's 250th Anniversary Celebrations in Boston
Keith Lockhart Honored with Third Lantern Award at Old North Church



From L to R: Angela Johnson, Keith Lockhart, Nikki Stewart and Jared Bowen. Photo credit: The Office of Governor Maura T. Healey.

BOSTON, Mass. - Boston officially kicked off America's 250th anniversary celebration with a powerful tribute to history, arts and culture, and civic unity at Lanterns & Luminaries, held at the iconic Old North Church on the eve of Patriots' Day weekend.

Hosted by Old North Illuminated, the nonprofit that works to preserve and operate the historic site, the annual event brought together community leaders, historians, and music lovers to commemorate the famous April 1775 lantern signal that helped spark the American Revolution. The evening's centerpiece was the presentation of the Third Lantern Award to Keith Lockhart, longtime conductor of the Boston Pops, in recognition of his decades of cultural leadership and commitment to uniting communities through music.

The program featured the Boston Pops Esplanade Brass Quintet, period music by Tripp and Toddy, a stirring reading of "Paul Revere's Ride" performed by Roberto Mighty, remarks by Governor of Massachusetts Maura Healey and fireworks projections by Illuminus. The evening culminated in the ceremonial lighting of lanterns in Old North's historic steeple, honoring the "two if by sea" signal that launched the American Revolution.

"This evening is about more than commemoration; it's about renewing our commitment to liberty and justice for all," said Nikki Stewart, Executive Director of Old North Illuminated. "As we approach America's 250th anniversary, Lanterns & Luminaries reminds us that the ideals exemplified in Old North's signal lanterns — courage, leadership, and active citizenship — still call on each of us today. Seeing the community gather in this historic place, a place where revolution continues to echo, is both moving and inspiring."

In accepting the Third Lantern Award, Lockhart reflected on the enduring connection between music, history, and national identity.



“Standing here at Old North, where a simple signal helped shape the course of history, is profoundly meaningful,” said Lockhart. “From my earliest memories of learning ‘Paul Revere’s Ride’ with my grandfather, to my years with the Boston Pops, I’ve come to believe that music is one of the ways we tell our shared story — not just where we’ve been, but who we aspire to be. If my work has helped bring people together across moments of celebration and challenge, then I’m deeply honored to carry forward the spirit of the Third Lantern.”

First lit in 1975 to mark the nation’s Bicentennial, the Third Lantern symbolizes hope for future generations and the enduring relevance of America’s founding principles. Lockhart joins a distinguished group of honorees, following filmmaker Ken Burns, who received the award in 2025.

Proceeds from Lanterns & Luminaries support Old North Illuminated’s ongoing preservation and educational initiatives, aimed at inspiring deeper public engagement with history and civic life as the United States approaches this milestone anniversary. This year’s event raised over \$135,000.

As the 250th anniversary sparks a banner year along Boston’s Freedom Trail, visitors from across the country and around the world can step inside Old North Church Historic Site, which is open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and from 12:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday. From July through October, hours expand to Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and from 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday. Holiday and November–December hours may vary. For more information, visit: www.oldnorth.com.

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 2024, Old North Illuminated was presented with a Leadership in History – Award of Excellence from the American Association for State and Local History, the most prestigious recognition for achievement in the preservation and interpretation of American history. The award-winning project, “Expanding History at Old North Church,” encompassed a new exhibit, audio guide, and online video series. For more information, visit: www.oldnorth.com.

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