

THE FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST IN HARTFORD, “CENTER CHURCH”

An Open and Affirming Congregation of the United Church of Christ

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The First Church of Christ in Hartford Partners with The Official Royal House of Sori and The Root Nine Foundation and Institute to Honor a 200-Year Legacy of Faith, Freedom, and Cultural Preservation

Hartford, Conn. — November 6, 2025 — The First Church of Christ in Hartford, known as **Center Church**, has entered into a formal partnership with **The Official Royal House of Sori (TORHOS)** and its affiliated nonprofit, **The Root Nine Foundation and Institute**, led by **Her Royal Highness Princess Karen Wright-Sori Brengettsy-Chatman**, to honor and preserve the life, legacy, and spiritual journey of **Prince Abdulrahman Ibrahima Ibn Sori**.

This partnership celebrates nearly **two centuries of shared history** between Center Church and the descendants of Prince Abdulrahman, an African royal who was enslaved in the United States and later gained his freedom with the help of members of the Hartford congregation.

In **October 1828**, Prince Abdulrahman and his wife, **Isabella**, visited Center Church's Historic Meeting House at the invitation of **Reverend Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet**, a church member best known as a pioneer of deaf education. During their visit, church members raised funds through the **American Colonization Society** to help secure the freedom of the couple's children and assist with their relocation to Liberia. Reverend Gallaudet and fellow member **Seth Terry** later traveled with the Prince through New England to advocate for freedom and justice.

Now, nearly 200 years later, Center Church, TORHOS, and The Root Nine Foundation and Institute are renewing that historic bond through a formal agreement centered on faith, education, and historical preservation.

Together, the organizations will:

- Promote historically accurate storytelling, site preservation, and continuing education through research, public programming, and community engagement.
- Collaborate on events such as **Black History Month**, **Emancipation Day observances**, educational symposia, and **“Walking in the Footsteps of a Prince”**, a signature TORHOS initiative.
- Advance **The Root Nine Foundation and Institute's** mission to uplift descendants, support global humanitarian initiatives, and strengthen cross-cultural understanding.

“This partnership reaffirms Center Church's enduring commitment to truth, compassion, and community,” said Larry Roeming, Moderator of Center Church. “By joining with The Official Royal House of Sori and The Root Nine Foundation and Institute, we honor our shared past while continuing to build a legacy of justice, reconciliation, and faith in action.”

“This collaboration represents a sacred renewal between faith and heritage,” said **Her Royal Highness Princess Karen Wright-Sori Brengettsy-Chatman**, Sovereign of **The Official Royal House of Sori** and Founder of **The Root Nine Foundation and Institute**. “Together, we are restoring the story of Prince Abdulrahman while preserving the spiritual and cultural bridges that unite our communities across time and continents.”

This partnership stands as a testament to **Center Church's ongoing role in advancing social justice and cultural understanding**, reflecting a living legacy of faith that continues to inspire future generations.

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