



## **Brief History of the Cathedral**

Major Pierre L'Enfant first proposed a great “church for national purposes” when he drew up his plan for the city of Washington following the American Revolution. More than a century later, a group of Washington residents met in the home of Charles C. Glover to plan the construction of the Cathedral.

The foundation stone was laid on September 29, 1907, in the presence of President Theodore Roosevelt who said, “Godspeed the work begun this noon.” Every president of the United States since then has either attended services or visited the Cathedral.

Bethlehem Chapel has held daily services since it opened in 1912. In October 1928, President Calvin Coolidge came to open the General Convention of the Episcopal Church.

The Cathedral quickly became a place for services of national focus. When the United States entered World War II in 1941, monthly services “on behalf of a united people in a time of emergency” began.

As construction continued, the Cathedral continued to take its place in history. President Woodrow Wilson’s tomb was dedicated in 1956 (Wilson is the only U.S. president buried in the District of Columbia). The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., preached his last Sunday sermon from the Canterbury Pulpit in 1968. Thousands gathered for President’s Dwight D. Eisenhower’s funeral in 1969.

In 1976, the Cathedral’s nave and west rose window were completed and dedicated in the presence of Queen Elizabeth II and President Gerald Ford. The completion of the west towers in September 1990 marked the end of construction.

As the nation’s church, it was the site of the National Prayer and Remembrance Service on September 14, 2001 and the funeral of the fortieth president, Ronald Reagan.

The Cathedral is administered by the Protestant Episcopal Cathedral Foundation and headed by the Very Rev. Samuel T. Lloyd III, dean of Washington National Cathedral. The chief mission church of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, it is the seat of the Episcopal Bishop of Washington, the Right Reverend John Bryson Chane, and of the new Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church USA, the Most Reverend Katharine Jefferts Schori.

In addition to its connections to the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion, the Cathedral is open to all and is frequently the site of interfaith and ecumenical services. People of all faiths and denominations are welcome to visit and worship.

