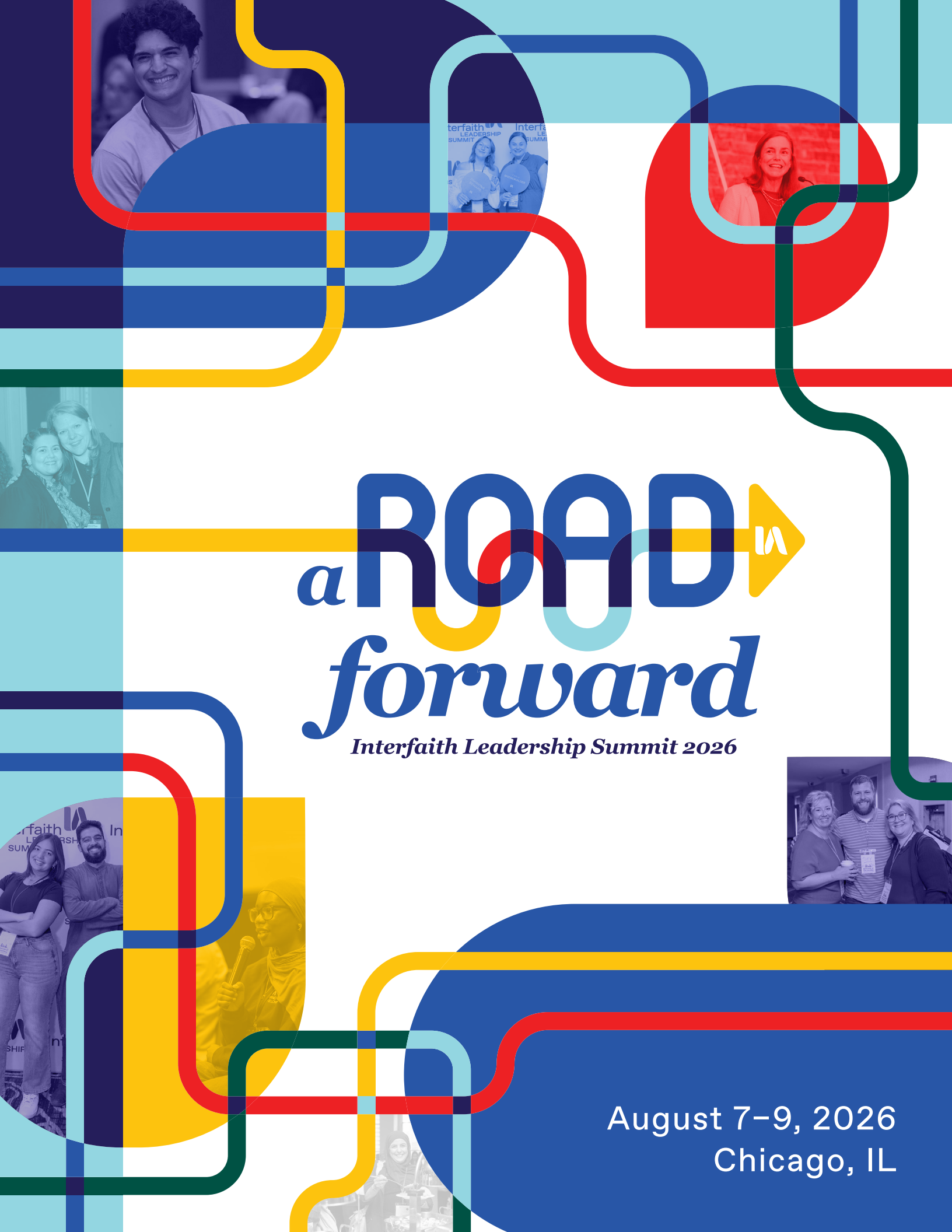




a ROAD *forward*

Interfaith Leadership Summit 2026

August 7–9, 2026
Chicago, IL



Welcome to the 2026 Interfaith Leadership Summit!

We are thrilled and honored you have joined us for one of Interfaith America's favorite weekends of the year. As it has been from the beginning, the Summit is designed to be a meaningful opportunity for connection, inspiration, and skill-building to foster pluralism in action in communities across the nation. We hope the next few days give you the resources and tools to imagine greater possibilities and make that vision real.

As IA's new Managing Directors, we are particularly excited to welcome you to an event that has a special place in our hearts. Both of us played leadership roles developing and launching the very first Interfaith Leadership Summit in 2010. We vividly remember the energy and passion in that first convening and we felt a sacred responsibility in supporting those participants' leadership experiences. This year's Summit looks a bit different—what began with 100 students has grown sevenfold into a flagship event—but what remains unchanged is our team's deep commitment to that same sense of opportunity and possibility.

Appropriately in our nation's 250th year, this Summit's theme invites us to reflect on *The Road Ahead*—what does this historical inflection point mean for the future potential of our nation? This is a complicated time in the United States, when we are wrestling with fundamental questions about who we are and what it means to live into our national motto of *e pluribus unum*, or *out of many, one*. America itself is on a winding, intersecting road—and we know that it will take all of us, and a deep commitment to cooperation across difference, to chart a road forward that lifts up all communities for the common good.

Your leadership is essential in realizing that vision. Over generations, America has been forged and re-forged by a multitude of American founders, each of whom claimed a place in the American story and built communities and spaces where people could respect one another's identities, build relationships across lines of difference, and cooperate on issues of common concerns. At Interfaith America, we believe pluralism itself is essential to the road ahead—and we are proud and honored to build alongside you to realize that vision in 2026, and beyond.

In gratitude and service,

Mary Ellen Giess & Amber Hacker
Managing Directors, Interfaith America



Roadside Attractions

Every good road trip has a few roadside attractions that you must visit. Once you check in, pull over and stretch your legs at each of these locations. These attractions will be available throughout the weekend so make sure to come back!



Check in

Kick off your Summit experience by checking in at the registration desks.



The Souvenir Shop

Visit The Souvenir Shop in the Visitor Center to pick up your Summit T-Shirt. Return throughout the weekend to see what we're giving away!



Name Tags

Personalize your name tag with your name and any other information you want people to know about you! Make sure to make your first name big and legible so others can read it! Please keep your name tag on all weekend so that hotel security knows that you are a part of our group.



The Rest Stop

Visit The Rest Stop now and throughout the weekend to take a break and make some art. You'll find supplies to make a keychain and personalize a postcard.



Send a Post Card

Share about your Summit experience with someone at home! Write and color in a postcard at The Rest Stop, address it, and drop it into the Interfaith America Mailbox. After the Summit, we'll take care of sending it out!



Connection and Reflection Bingo

Throughout the weekend, you can work on your bingo sheet on page 24. The first 50 people to complete the entire sheet will receive a prize!



Greetings from an Interfaith America

You bring the Summit to life, so make your mark and color in a section of our shared postcard. This will be a good photo op so make sure to snap a few pics to remember the weekend by!

Important Resources

Help Desk

If you need assistance at any point throughout the Summit, please visit The Help Desk located across from the main ballroom.

Help Desk Hours

- Friday:** 10:00 AM–8:00 PM
- Saturday:** 7:30 AM–4:00 PM, 7:30 PM–9:00 PM
- Sunday:** 7:30 AM–1:00 PM

Interfaith Support Team

This year, we are excited to offer unprogrammed times in the schedule for attendees to connect with one another, network, or have space to gather or observe a particular tradition. During **Connection & Reflection**, attendees can use this time to engage in meaningful conversations, build new relationships, take a walk, or pause for reflection. These moments are designed to support both community-building and individual renewal, allowing each participant to shape their own experience.

Due to the great diversity of traditions and practices represented at the Summit, IA does not directly provide organized services or observances. Instead, we encourage participants to organize their own DIY gatherings in the interfaith room. The interfaith room will be available for prayer, meditation, reflection, and more. There will be additional spaces for attendees to gather or have a quiet moment.

Our staff can also provide information about local houses of worship and observances if you are interested.

If you would like to organize a specific religious or spiritual gathering, we invite you to use the interfaith room. **The Interfaith Support Team will be available throughout the weekend to assist participants with their religious, spiritual, and philosophical needs. The Support Team will be available outside the interfaith room on the 2nd floor during all Connection & Reflection sessions.** We encourage you to let other attendees know what you’re organizing by writing it on the white board outside the interfaith room as well.

Thank you for sharing your needs with us prior to the Summit. We have done our best to satisfy them. Should there be additional needs that arise during the Summit weekend, please let us know and we will do our best to accommodate them.

Meal and Dietary Information

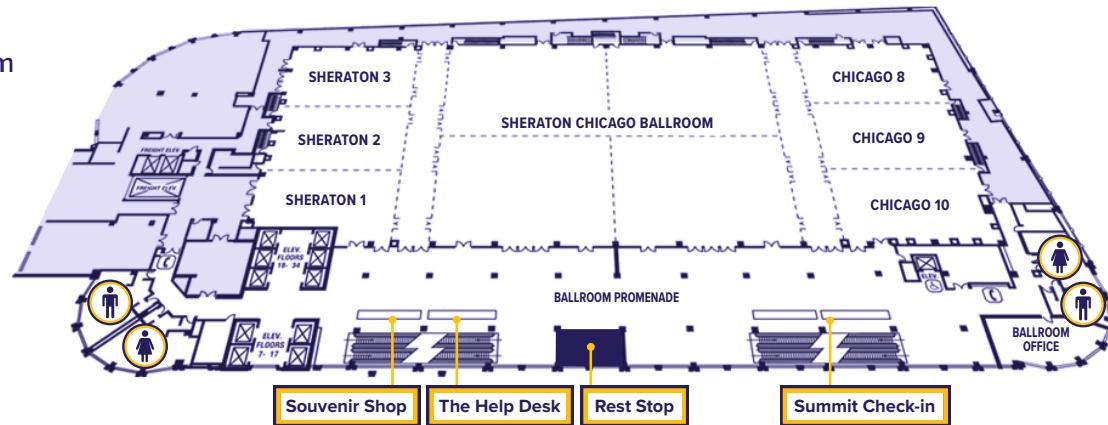
In our efforts to foster an environment that meets the religious observance needs of all attendees, the Interfaith Leadership Summit plans to provide halal, kosher, vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free, dairy-free meal options throughout the weekend. The below outlines what you can expect during mealtimes at the Summit.

- Dietary labels listing the name of each dish, its ingredients and applicable dietary information will be available for all meals.
- There is no pork or alcohol in any of the meals provided.
- Nuts will be featured as part of some of this weekend’s meals, but always on the side of a dish, not incorporated.
- Gluten-Free (GF), Dairy-Free (DF), Vegetarian (V) and Vegan (VGN), and Nut-free (NF) options will be available at every meal.
- All poultry and beef offered on the buffet is halal, including breakfast meat
- If you requested a kosher meal during registration, a kosher buffet will be provided. Please look for signage indicating which buffet is the kosher buffet.
- We have only ordered kosher buffet meals for those who indicated a need on their registration. Out of respect to our kosher participants, if you do not require a kosher meal, please enjoy the food in the main buffet!
- If you have any questions about the food during the Summit, please do not hesitate to go to the Help Desk to get connected to our dietary support team member.
- The Summit team has made heartfelt efforts to accommodate individual dietary needs; however, please be sure to read food labels carefully.

Map

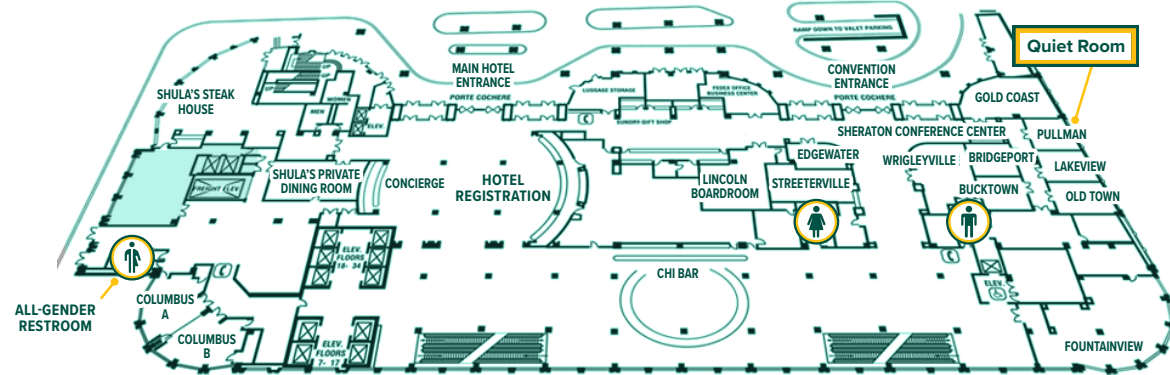
Floor 4

- Sheraton Chicago Ballroom
- Sheraton 1
- Sheraton 2
- Sheraton 3
- Chicago 1
- Chicago 2
- Chicago 3
- Ballroom Promenade



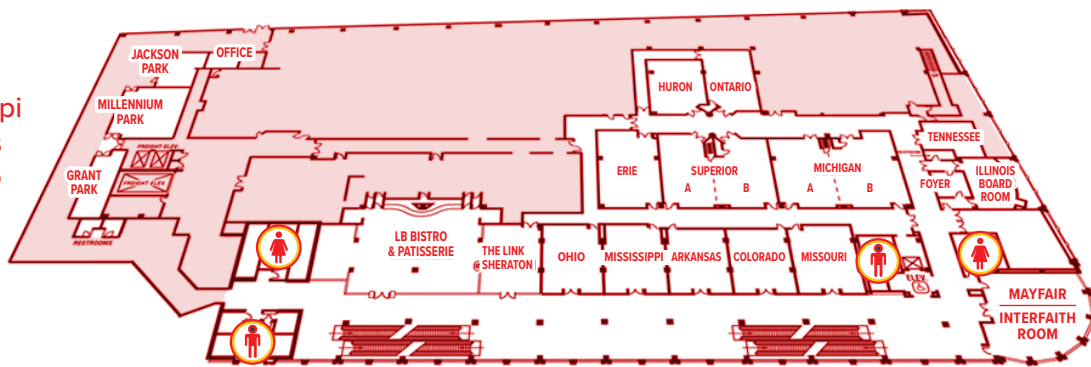
Floor 3

- Columbus AB
- Streeterville
- Wrigleyville
- Fountainview
- Gold Coast
- Pullman



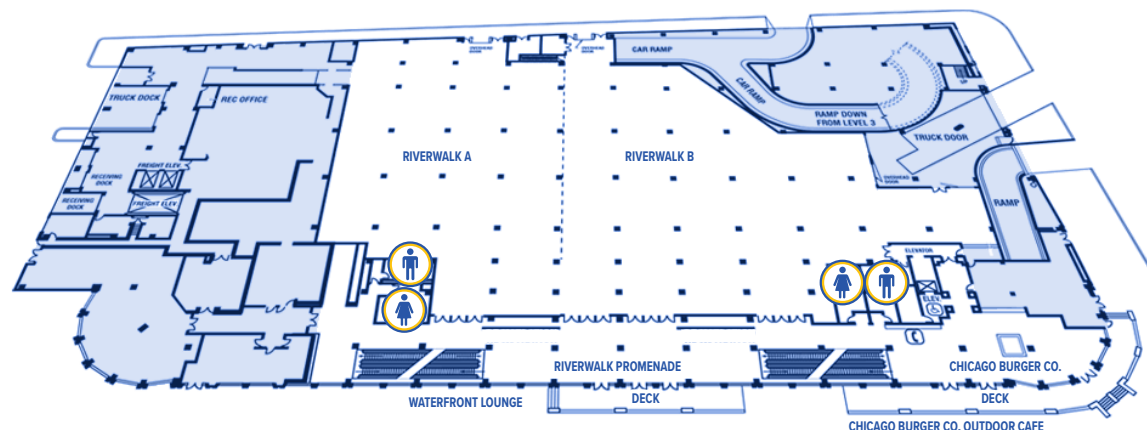
Floor 2

- Jackson Park
- Millennium Park
- Grant Park
- Huron
- Ontario
- Erie
- Superior A
- Superior B
- Michigan A
- Michigan B
- Ohio
- Mississippi
- Arkansas
- Colorado
- Missouri
- Mayfair



Floor 1

- Riverwalk A
- Riverwalk B



Bathrooms

Bathrooms are marked on the map. A single stall, all gender bathroom is available on Floor 3 (the Lobby Floor), past the Columbus AB rooms.



Quiet Room

There is a quiet room available in the Pullman room on the lobby floor for those looking to take a break in the conference area.



Interfaith Room

Hours: 6:00 AM – 10:00 PM | Floor 2: Mayfair

This space will be open for prayer and reflection for the entirety of the weekend. Attendees are welcome to gather for observances, such as Jummah, Shabbat, Communion, meditation, and other practices at your own discretion.

Members of The Interfaith Support team will be available to assist with observance gatherings and can be found outside of the room during Connection and Reflection times. The Interfaith Room is equipped with prayer mats, meditation cushions, Shabbat supplies, and reading materials. We also encourage you to join a local congregation or house of worship for your religious observances. There is a list to get your search started available on the app and at The Help Desk.



Bizzabo App



How to Get the App

Download the Bizzabo App to stay connected and access additional content!

- 1. **Find the app:** Open either the App Store (for iOS devices) or the Google Play Store (for Android devices). Search for “Bizzabo”
- 2. **Download the app:** Download and install the app on your device.
- 3. **Search for the event:** “2026 Interfaith Leadership Summit.”
- 4. **Log in** using the name and email address you used to register.
- 5. **Turn on notifications** so that you receive important messages and announcements. You will be prompted to enable notifications when you first log in. If you miss that opportunity, you can navigate to Profile > Settings > Notifications > Allow.

Download the Bizzabo app to make the most of your weekend!
The app is your go-to guide for everything Summit.*



View the schedule



Connect with other attendees



Message the Help Desk or Dietary Team



Find speaker bios, menus, local houses of worship, floor plans, and more

Additional Information Available on the App

All of these documents will also be printed out and available at the Help Desk:

- 1. Full Speaker Bios
- 2. Extended Dietary Info and Menu
- 3. Local Houses of Worship
- 4. List of Affinity Tables
- 5. Shabbat Observant Attendees Info Sheet

Wi-Fi in the Conference Space

Network: **Summit26**

Password: **aroadforward**

**Not using technology throughout the weekend?
Don't worry, everything available on the app will be printed and available at the Help Desk for your use!*

Schedule at a Glance

Friday, August 7th, 2026

10:00 AM – 11:30 AM	Registration & Check in
11:30 AM – 1:00 PM	Lunch & Opening Plenary
1:00 PM – 1:45 PM	Connection & Reflection
1:45 PM – 3:30 PM	Training Session 1
3:30 PM – 3:45 PM	Snack Break
3:45 PM – 5:30 PM	Training Session 2
5:45 PM – 7:30 PM	Potluck 250
7:30 PM – 8:30 PM	Connection & Reflection

Saturday, August 8th, 2026

7:30 AM – 8:00 AM	Connection & Reflection
7:30 AM – 8:45 AM	Breakfast
9:00 AM – 11:00 AM	Saturday Symposia
11:00 AM – 11:15 AM	Snack Break
11:15 AM – 12:45 PM	Training Session 3
12:45 PM – 2:00 PM	Lunch
2:00 PM – 3:30 PM	Training Session 4
3:30 PM	Free Time & Dinner on your own
7:30 PM – 8:30 PM	Ice Cream Social (Optional)
8:00 PM – 9:30 PM	Movie Night (Optional)

Sunday, August 9th, 2026

7:30 AM – 8:00 AM	Connection & Reflection
7:30 AM – 9:15 AM	Breakfast
9:30 AM – 11:00 AM	Training Session 5
11:00 AM – 11:30 AM	Connection & Reflection
11:30 AM – 1:00 PM	Lunch & Closing Plenary

Schedule in Detail

Friday, August 7th

10:00 AM – 11:30 AM

Check in

→ *Ballroom Promenade, 4th Floor*

Kick off your roadtrip by checking in at the registration desks on the 4th Floor. Once you have checked in, make sure to visit The Visitor Center and write a postcard to mark your journey.

11:30 AM – 1:00 PM

Opening Lunch and Plenary

→ *Sheraton-Chicago Ballroom, 4th Floor*

A Road Forward: The Role of Pluralism in the Future of Our Country

Featuring: Eboo Patel, Amy Spitalnick, Carlos Campo, Loretta Ross

In our opening session for the Summit, national leaders will join Eboo Patel on stage to highlight pluralism as a vital part of our democratic fabric and offer a vision for how we can chart the path forward and strengthen it along the way.

1:00 PM – 1:45 PM

Connection and Reflection

We are excited to offer unprogrammed times for attendees to connect with one another, network, or have space to gather or observe a particular tradition. During **Connection & Reflection** times, attendees can engage in meaningful conversations, build new relationships, take a walk, or pause for reflection. These moments are designed to support both community-building and individual renewal, allowing each participant to shape their own experience.

Things to do now and throughout the weekend:



Make and send a personalized postcard



Add to our shared postcard



Make a keychain at the Rest Stop



Snap a pic in front of the photo wall



Visit the Visitor Center for merch

1:45 PM – 3:30 PM

Training Session 1

→ *Multiple Locations - see the back of your nametag for your specific room*

Your Summit experience is centered around your Training Room. Get to know your trainers and fellow participants because you'll be spending the rest of the weekend with them!

3:30 PM – 3:45 PM

Snack Break

Grab a snack and, if you haven't already, make sure to make a postcard to send home!

3:45 PM – 5:30 PM

Training Session 2

→ *Multiple Locations - see the back of your nametag for your specific room*

5:45 PM – 7:30 PM

Potluck 250

→ *Sheraton-Chicago Ballroom, 4th Floor*

Potluck 250 is a special Friday night dinner inspired by the promise of a Potluck Nation. While we often hear stories of division, most believe we can learn from people with different viewpoints and have a responsibility to engage across differences. This dinner is an opportunity to connect with attendees from across institutions, share stories, and build new relationships.

Attendees will enjoy live music from **Harmony of Difference** and participate in a guided activity designed to foster intentional and positive engagement with your dinner companions.

Find the sticker on the back of your nametag and sit at the table with the corresponding marker.

Meals will be served family style to your table. This meal is intentionally vegetarian heavy but servers will be coming around offering a chicken or salmon dish for those interested. If you have special dietary needs or need a kosher meal, please let the server know when they come to your table.

7:30 PM – 8:30 PM

Connection and Reflection

You've had a long first day! Take the time to continue to connect with others or reflect on your experience.



Explore America's Potluck Toolkit

Saturday, August 8th

7:30 AM – 8:00 AM

Connection and Reflection

7:30 AM – 8:45 AM

Breakfast

→ *Sheraton-Chicago Ballroom, 4th Floor*

Fuel up for a full day! If necessary, there will be brief announcements at 8:30 a.m.



9:00 AM – 11:00 AM

Saturday Symposia

→ *Sheraton-Chicago Ballroom, 4th Floor*

The Saturday Symposia are a chance to curate your Summit experience by learning more about a specific topic. Read through the descriptions to decide what workshop you are interested in participating in. During the Saturday Symposia, participants will have an opportunity to choose and attend two 50-minute sessions. The sessions will run from 9:00 AM–9:50 AM and 10:00 AM - 10:50 AM

• BRAID-ing Together Student-led Interfaith Projects

→ *Sheraton 3*

2026 BRAID Student Fellows

Inspired by this weekend but aren’t sure how you can start interfaith action on campus as a student? Hear firsthand from the 2026 BRAID (Bridgebuilders Relating Across Interfaith Differences) Student Fellows about their experience in the cohort and planning interfaith leadership projects on campus. Those interested in applying for future student fellowships should attend to learn more about the program and spark ideas about potential on-campus projects.

• Democracy Needs You: Hands-On Tools for Election Work

→ *Chicago 8*

Matt Kendziera, Ria Chakrabarty, Jane Andersen

Engage with the *Faith in Elections Playbook* to discover your next move in strengthening civic participation. Join Vote Is Sacred Fellows for an interactive session highlighting practical ways communities can support voter engagement, foster civil discourse, and deepen involvement throughout the election cycle. Through fellow insights and small-group activities, participants will explore key tools from the playbook and reflect on their own opportunities to lead with integrity and hope. This session will offer meaningful guidance and actionable strategies for sustaining engagement during an election year.

• Interfaith after Graduation

→ *Chicago 10*

Nia Alvarez-Mapp, Keryn Wouden, Matt Segil, Barakissa Gakou

You’ve done a great job as an interfaith leader in college, but what happens after graduation? Interfaith skills are essential because of how they touch every career and vocation. Join this session to hear from IA Emerging Leaders and Workplace partners about the different ways that they have transitioned their interfaith skills into life after graduation, in the medical, civic, arts, and business fields.

- **Pixels, Panels, and Performance: Creative Storytelling for Interfaith Leaders**

→ *Riverwalk 1*

Max Yeshaye Brumberg-Kraus, Lily Qi, Rose Sall

What does interfaith leadership look like when it's told through a film, a comic strip, or a drag performance? In this session, three Emerging Leaders—a filmmaker, a cartoonist, and a drag artist—share how they use visual storytelling to build connection across difference, challenge assumptions, and bring pluralism to life for audiences who might never set foot in a traditional interfaith space. Whether you're a content creator, an educator looking for new ways to engage students, or simply someone who believes that stories change minds, this session will leave you thinking differently about the tools at your disposal. Come ready to be inspired and rethink what interfaith leadership can look like.

- **Collaborative Problem-Solving Workshop**

→ *Sheraton-Chicago Ballroom 4-7 (Note: This symposia will take place from 9:00–11:00 a.m. and will only run once)*

Suzanne Ghais

The Collaborative Problem-Solving – Skills, Mindsets, and Tools workshop will help participants build the mindset, skills, and practical tools needed to navigate conflict and find solutions across divides. Together, we'll explore why conflict arises, how our brains respond under stress, and how to shift into a problem-solving mindset rooted in curiosity, empathy, and openness. Participants will learn a proven, step-by-step process for collaborative problem-solving — covering how to define and frame issues, convene diverse stakeholders, build trust, uncover shared interests, and develop “higher-ground” solutions that meet everyone's most important needs. Through discussion, hands-on activities, and role-play exercises, participants will leave with concrete strategies and insights they can apply to real-world challenges in their organizations, communities, and networks.

- **See What's Possible: Visual Storytelling, Virtuous Hope, and a Road Forward**

→ *Sheraton 2*

Roman Williams

In a country as religiously, secularly, and spiritually diverse as ours, something important happens when people use their own photos to tell stories about what they're hoping for on the road forward. Seeing hope through one another's lenses—across traditions, worldviews, and life experiences—builds the kind of interpersonal closeness, mutual understanding, and resilience that pluralistic communities need. You'll use a photo on your smartphone to tell a story about where you're seeing hope. No smartphone? No problem! We'll have photos you can use. Either way, you'll experience the power of photovoice for interfaith and intergroup dialogue.

- **Inheritance Theater Project Workshop**

→ *Sheraton 1*

Namibia Donadio, Rose Ginsberg

Inheritance Theater Project is a national nonprofit that uses creative collaboration to open hearts, build empathy, and bring people of all backgrounds closer together, demonstrating what is possible when artists lead the work of connection. Over the past eleven years, ITP has facilitated interfaith playmaking workshops and retreats on more than 3 dozen college campuses across the country, including College of Charleston, Columbia University, Old Dominion University, the University of Nebraska, the University of California Riverside, and Harvard Divinity School. In our workshop at the symposium, you will get a chance to dip your toes in the water of participatory playmaking as a tool for creating, rather than debating with each other. There will be elements of movement, writing, and collaboration. This workshop is co-facilitated by Namibia Donadio, an artist, cultural fire-starter, and community architect; and Rose Ginsberg, a theatre director, deviser, and educator.



- **Is It Working? What the Data Says About Pluralism in Practice**

→ *Chicago 9*

Aisha Thompson, Darian Rice

Pluralism work is easy to describe and hard to measure. This session takes on the harder part.

You've been through IA programming. You've gone back to your campus, organization, or community and tried to apply what you learned. But how do you know if anything changed?

Aisha Thompson, Interfaith America's Director of Evaluation, shares what the first year of IA's new Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning framework reveals about the path from training to lasting institutional change. Drawing on rapid surveys and annual survey data from leaders across higher education, civic, and workplace settings, the session explores where the Respect, Relate, Cooperate framework is taking hold, where confidence and application diverge, and what gets in the way.

A facilitated group exercise invites participants to name what meaningful change would look like in their own organizations — and what's standing between them and knowing whether it's happening.

This session is for anyone who has invested in pluralism work and wants to know whether it is doing what they hope.

11:00 AM – 11:15 AM

Snack Break

11:15 AM – 12:45 PM

Training Session 3

→ *Multiple Locations - see the back of your nametag for your specific room*

12:45 PM – 2:00 PM

Lunch

→ *Sheraton-Chicago Ballroom, 4th Floor*

Make a plate and pick a table for this affinity lunch! During this meal, half of the tables will have signs so that you can choose to connect with those from similar institutions. Conversations will be self-guided so we encourage you to take initiative and chat! This will be a great time to fill out a few boxes from your Connection and Reflection Bingo!

2:00 PM – 3:30 PM

Training Session 4

→ *Multiple Locations - see the back of your nametag for your specific room*

3:30 PM

Free Time and Dinner on your own

→ *Sheraton-Chicago Ballroom, 4th Floor*

Make the most of this free time to explore downtown Chicago, connect with peers, or prioritize rest. We invite you to grab a group of friends to dine with on your own. Check out some Interfaith America staff recommendations on page 26 to get started.

7:30 PM – 8:30 PM

Ice Cream Social

→ *Ballroom Promenade, 4th Floor*

Cool down from a long day with a sweet treat! Come for the ice cream, stay for the community!

8:00 PM – 9:30 PM

Movie Night

Not sure what to do during your free time? Come watch a screening of *UNDIVIDED* or *All of the Above* and meet the creators behind the films!

UNDIVIDED

→ *Chicago 8*

UNDIVIDED is a docuseries (in development) that asks the question: “Who is included in the story of America?” Hosted by Simran Jeet Singh — an educator, activist, and national bestselling author — *UNDIVIDED* takes us on a cross-country tour to discover how the fight for freedom through American history has shaped and been shaped by our diverse religious communities. *UNDIVIDED* introduces audiences to stories that are often unknown and overlooked, shedding light on how our unique struggles actually bind us together.

Following the screening, there will be a Q&A with Simran Jeet Singh

All of the Above

→ *Chicago 10*

Students from different faith backgrounds come together for an epic World Religions class in a public high school. With the help of their teacher, the mild-mannered suburbanites confront the preconceived notions of their peers’ faiths.

Sunday, August 9th

7:30 AM – 8:00 AM

Connection and Reflection

7:30 AM – 9:15 AM

Breakfast

→ Sheraton-Chicago Ballroom, 4th Floor

Grab the most important meal of the day and take the time to check out of your hotel rooms now! Once you check out, the front desk will be able to store your luggage for the remainder of the day. You won't have time to do this later so make sure to get this done before you come down for breakfast!

9:30 AM – 11:00 AM

Training Session 5

→ Multiple Locations - see the back of your nametag for your specific room

11:00 AM – 11:30 AM

Break

11:30 AM – 1:00 PM

Lunch and Closing Plenary

→ Sheraton-Chicago Ballroom, 4th Floor

A Pluralistic Roadmap for College Campuses

Featuring: Vanessa Gomez Brake, Sabeen Safi, Simran Jeet Singh, Steven Collis

Moderated by Melissa Carter

To conclude the Summit, a panel of campus leaders will reflect on the opportunities and challenges of creating a road forward for pluralism in higher education. Drawing from their own institutions, panelists will share stories of how they've navigated difference, built relationships, and cultivated cooperation.



Plenary Speakers

To learn more about our speakers, please read their full biographies on the Summit event app (Bizzabo).



Eboo Patel
Founder and President, Interfaith America

Eboo Patel is a civic leader, speaker, and author advancing the notion that diversity is a treasure and cooperation across our difference is the key for everybody to thrive. Recognized as “one of America’s best leaders” by U.S. News and World Report, he is the Founder and President of Interfaith America (IA), the nation’s leading interfaith organization. Under his leadership, IA has grown into a \$20 million-per-year organization that partners with governments, universities, businesses, and civic organizations to transform faith into a bridge of cooperation rather than a barrier of division.

Eboo’s impact extends to serving on President Obama’s Inaugural Faith Council, delivering hundreds of keynote addresses, and authoring five influential books, including *We Need to Build: Field Notes for Diverse Democracy*.



Prof. Loretta J. Ross
Activist, Public Intellectual and Professor, SpeakOut

Prof. Loretta J. Ross is an activist and professor whose work has transformed how we think about human rights, equity, and social change. Her newest book, *Calling In: How to Start Making Change with Those You’d Rather Cancel* (2025), presents a compassionate framework for fostering dialogue across difference. Loretta’s activism began in the 1970s and her work addressing sexual violence, particularly within communities of color, helped lay the foundation for what would later become the #MeToo movement. She co-founded the SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective and held leadership roles with the National Organization for Women (NOW), the National Black Women’s Health Project, and the National Anti-Klan Network. In 1996, she founded the Center for Human Rights Education.

Ross is the co-author of three influential books on reproductive justice including *Undivided Rights: Women of Color Organize for Reproductive Justice*.



Dr. Carlos Campo
CEO & President, Museum of the Bible

Dr. Carlos Campo serves as Chief Executive Officer of the Museum of the Bible, helping the museum advance its mission to invite all people to engage with the transformative power of the Bible. His appointment follows an accomplished career in higher education, including service as president of Ashland University, president of Regent University, and Chief Academic Officer at the College of Southern Nevada. He holds honorary doctorates from the University of Vienna, Taylor University, and Indiana Wesleyan University, and was named Alumnus of the Year by the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. He is a four-time honoree in Who’s Who Among American Teachers.

Campo serves as vice chair of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference and is widely regarded as one of the nation’s most influential Latino Christian leaders.



Amy Spitalnick
CEO, Jewish Council for Public Affairs

Amy Spitalnick is the CEO of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, the national convener of Jewish coalitions working across communities to build a just and inclusive American democracy. She previously served as Executive Director of Integrity First for America, which won its groundbreaking lawsuit against the hate groups responsible for the Charlottesville violence.

Spitalnick has extensive experience in government and advocacy, including as Communications Director and Senior Policy Advisor to the New York Attorney General and spokesperson for the New York City Mayor. She serves on the boards of directors of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and the Polarization and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab at American University. She has earned many honors, including being named a Truman National Security Project Fellow and a City & State 40 Under 40 Rising Star.



Dr. Vanessa Gomez Brake
Senior Associate Dean, University of Southern California Office of Religious & Spiritual Life

Dr. Vanessa Gomez Brake is the Senior Associate Dean of Religious Life at the University of Southern California, the first humanist chaplain to serve in this capacity at any American university. She also serves as an advisor to the USC Interfaith Council and the Secular Student Fellowship. In 2025, Brake was honored with the Chaplain of the Year Award from the Association for Chaplaincy & Spiritual Life in Higher Education. Previously, she worked at Stanford University’s Office for Religious Life, where she led campus programming and worked closely with student-led religious groups.

As an accomplished Filipino folk dancer and multi-instrumentalist, Vanessa has performed at the White House and Carnegie Hall for Filipino American History Month celebrations. Her folk artistry is an extension of her interfaith work, as her performances showcase the diverse traditions, rituals, and beliefs of Muslim, Christian, and indigenous peoples of the Philippines.



Prof. Steven T. Collis
Law Professor & Director, Bech-Loughlin First Amendment Center, University of Texas at Austin

Prof. Steven T. Collis is the author of the nonfiction books *The Immortals* and *Deep Conviction*, the novels *Praying with the Enemy* and *At Any Cost* and the upcoming *Habits of a Peacemaker*. He is a law professor at the University of Texas-Austin School of Law and founding faculty director of UT’s Bech-Loughlin First Amendment Center and related Law & Religion Clinic.

He is a sought-after speaker on both writing and religion law to audiences across the United States, including foreign diplomats from countries in Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and South America on behalf of the United States State Department. He has been interviewed by and quoted in various news outlets, including *The Deseret News*, *Bloomberg*, *NPR*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Washington Times*.



Sabeen Safi
Student, University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine

Sabeen Safi (she/her) is a student at the University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine, where she is training to provide holistic dental care that takes into account the worldviews and identities that shape patients’ experiences of health and healing.

Sabeen’s commitment to interfaith work began at Muhlenberg College during one of the most polarizing seasons in recent memory: a presidential election and global conflicts that fractured campuses nationwide. Rather than insulating herself in the safety of familiar circles, she leaned into the vulnerability of being open and uncomfortable with challenging viewpoints. She found that being surrounded by people who think differently is not a challenge to be managed, but one of the defining gifts of a college education. As an Interfaith America BRAID Fellow, Sabeen channeled this conviction into action by leading the creation of a multifaith space on campus.

She believes that learning to sit with difference and remain curious about people unlike yourself is not a phase of life; it is a practice worth carrying everywhere.



Dr. Simran Jeet Singh
National Bestselling Author

Simran is a professor of history at Union Theological Seminary and national bestselling author of *The Light We Give: How Sikh Wisdom Can Transform Your Life*. He is Senior Advisor for the Aspen Institute’s Religion and Society Program and also hosts *Wisdom & Practice*, a new podcast by The Aspen Institute and PRX. Simran has spoken on the mainstage at SXSW in Austin, Texas, at Stanford University’s commencement ceremonies, and for Fortune 500 companies around the globe. He is an Atlantic Fellow with the Atlantic Philanthropies, a Soros Equality Fellow with the Open Society Foundations, and a Senior Fellow for the Sikh Coalition. Simran earned graduate degrees from Harvard University and Columbia University, and an undergraduate degree from Trinity University. He writes regularly for various outlets, including *TIME Magazine*, *Harvard Business Review*, and *Religion News Service*. Simran authored the award-winning children’s book *Fauja Singh Keeps Going: The True Story of the Oldest Person to Ever Run a Marathon* (Kokila, Penguin Random House), and his next children’s book comes out this spring. Born and raised in San Antonio, Texas, Simran now lives in New York City with his wife and two daughters, where he enjoys running, writing, and chasing his kids.



Dr. Melissa Carter
Director of Student Life & Partnerships, Interfaith America

Dr. Melissa Carter is Director of Student Life and Partnerships at Interfaith America, where she leads national efforts to advance student leadership and institutional change in higher education at a pivotal moment for pluralistic democracy. She sets the strategic vision for engaging college students and campus professionals, elevating student leadership as a driver of cultural and institutional pluralism.

Carter brings more than a decade of leadership experience in higher education. Prior to Interfaith America, she served as Senior Director of Global Spiritual Life and Head of Mindfulness Education at New York University. She has taught at NYU, Claremont Lincoln University, and currently at the NYU Silver School of Social Work. Her research focuses on student well-being, generational cohorts, and interfaith engagement. She is a co-author of *A Student’s Search for Meaning* (2023).



Harmeet Kaur Kamboj
Assistant Director of Workplace Strategy, Interfaith America

Harmeet Kaur Kamboj, Assistant Director of Workplace Strategy at Interfaith America will be MC’ing the Summit. Harmeet holds a M.A. in Interreligious Engagement and S.T.M. in Religion & Society from Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York. They also hold a B.A. in English from the College of William & Mary. Prior to serving in their current role, Harmeet led state- and local-level advocacy campaigns at the Sikh Coalition. They previously served on IA’s Higher Education team and have held positions at America Indivisible, the Campaign for Youth Justice, and the Public Religion Research Institute.

Performers

Harmony of Difference Yashpreet Singh, Manjot Singh, Shravan Raghuram

Harmony of Difference is a newly formed improvisational ambient music ensemble born out of jam sessions and performances hosted by Shravan Raghuram. Presented in collaboration with Shruti Box Studios, a community-driven recording studio and creative space dedicated to fostering collaboration, experimentation, and the exchange of musical traditions, the ensemble brings together musicians from diverse backgrounds to explore the possibilities of spontaneous musical dialogue.

Rather than performing pre-composed works, Harmony of Difference creates music entirely in the moment. Each performance unfolds as an unrepeatable conversation, with every musical gesture shaped by the artists’ experiences, perspectives, and responses to one another in real time. The resulting soundscape reflects a shared commitment to curiosity, deep listening, and the transformative possibilities of improvisation.



Connection and Reflection BINGO

Over the next few days during Connection and Reflection time or meals choose a question to discuss with a partner. The goal is not to fill in the boxes and win, but to have a conversation, learn from each other, and find a shared value — you can begin anywhere. After you have found a shared value, sign each other’s box, move to a new person and question, and continue exploring. **The first 50 people to sign all of their boxes and go to the help desk will get a prize!**

B	I	N	G	O
What is your favorite icebreaker question?	What movie, TV show, or book has recently shaped your view of the world?	When did you start intentionally engaging in bridgebuilding? What did that look like?	What is something you’ve changed your mind about recently?	Do you observe a regular religious, spiritual, or values-based practice (like weekly services or prayer)?
If you could experience a piece of media again for the first time, what would it be?	Do you engage in a meditation practice?	How do you center yourself during challenging times?	Do you have a specific memory rooted in nature?	What is your favorite unexpected food combination?
What is your favorite road trip that you’ve been on?	Who do you consider to be a Pluralism Hero?	FREE SPACE  FREE SPACE	If you could go anywhere in the world tomorrow, where would you go? Why?	From where do you draw inspiration to do bridgebuilding work?
Describe one of your favorite celebrations in the last year. What did you love about it?	If your life was a movie or tv show, what would the title be?	Is there a personal experience that motivates your bridgebuilding work?	What is your favorite road trip snack?	How does your religious or ethical or moral identity inform your work?
Is there a concrete skill you have developed through bridgebuilding?	Who is one bridgebuilding or interfaith leader who inspires you?	What is a challenge of engaging bridgebuilding work that you are currently sitting with?	What do you listen to on a road trip?	Is there a verse, text, or poem you draw inspiration or strength from?

Resources



Want to put your training into action? Find Interfaith America’s best resources, including grants, events, and other opportunities in the Learning and Action Bridge!

Share your Story: #ILSummit26

Throughout the Summit, you’ll have a chance to share your story with our social media team. If you are excited to share, catch Cameron Dreher-Siefkes at the photowall or message her on the app to coordinate!

Make sure that you are following @interfaithamerica on Instagram, TikTok, Facebook and LinkedIn. We will be sharing content from the Summit throughout the weekend and beyond so keep a close eye to see if you recognize any faces!

You are all storytellers as well! Don’t forget to tag us and include #ILSummit26 so that we can see your point of view.



Staff Recommendations

Meg Huber, Civic Team:



Museum: American Writers Museum: The American Writers Museum - An Interactive Museum in Chicago, IL

Located right on Michigan Avenue on the second floor of a beautiful, classic Chicago skyscraper, the American Writers Museum is perfectly curated for a one- to two-hour visit. Its special exhibit, “American Prophets: Writers, Religion & Culture,” explores religious writers and how writing about religion shapes our understanding of faith and culture. Before you leave, be sure to spend a few minutes at the typewriters, where visitors can try writing something of their own.

Hours: 10 AM – 5 PM

Ramsey Hufford, Learning Team:



Chicago Architecture Center River Cruise: First Lady

Leave it to the Learning Team... but have a blast learning about the history of Chicago and its architecture (I didn’t believe it at first either)! The First Lady tour is set apart by the guides being volunteers from the Chicago Architecture Center. It’s an engaging and passionate tour, but you can still sit back and relax as you take in the city and its stunning sites!

Ramsey Hufford, Learning Team (continued):



The Art Institute of Chicago

Ferris Bueller’s Day Off barely scratched the surface. If you walk past that famous *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte* and keep going to the back wall, you’ll see my favorite painting there: Georgia O’Keeffe’s *Sky Above Clouds IV*. And if paintings aren’t your thing, head downstairs to the rotating photo gallery, and a room full of miniature rooms!



ART on THE MART

Build your own adventure around the city, but make it back to the riverwalk by 9 PM for Art on the Mart! For your weekend only, there will be a special show highlighting Chicago’s own Bud Billiken Parade. Running from 9–9:30 PM on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, you can watch from the riverwalk between the N Orleans St & N Wells St bridges.

Friday–Sunday: 11 AM–5 PM



Mozart Requiem: Grant Park Music Festival

Head over to Millennium Park on Friday or Saturday night, and check off a couple items from your Chicago bucket list. See the bean (Cloud Gate sculpture) on your way to the Jay Pritzker Pavilion for a summer music series featuring: Mozart Requiem. Starting on Friday at 6:30 PM, and Saturday at 7:30 PM, you can bring a picnic blanket or rush over to try and grab one of the free seats!



Notes



www.interfaithamerica.org