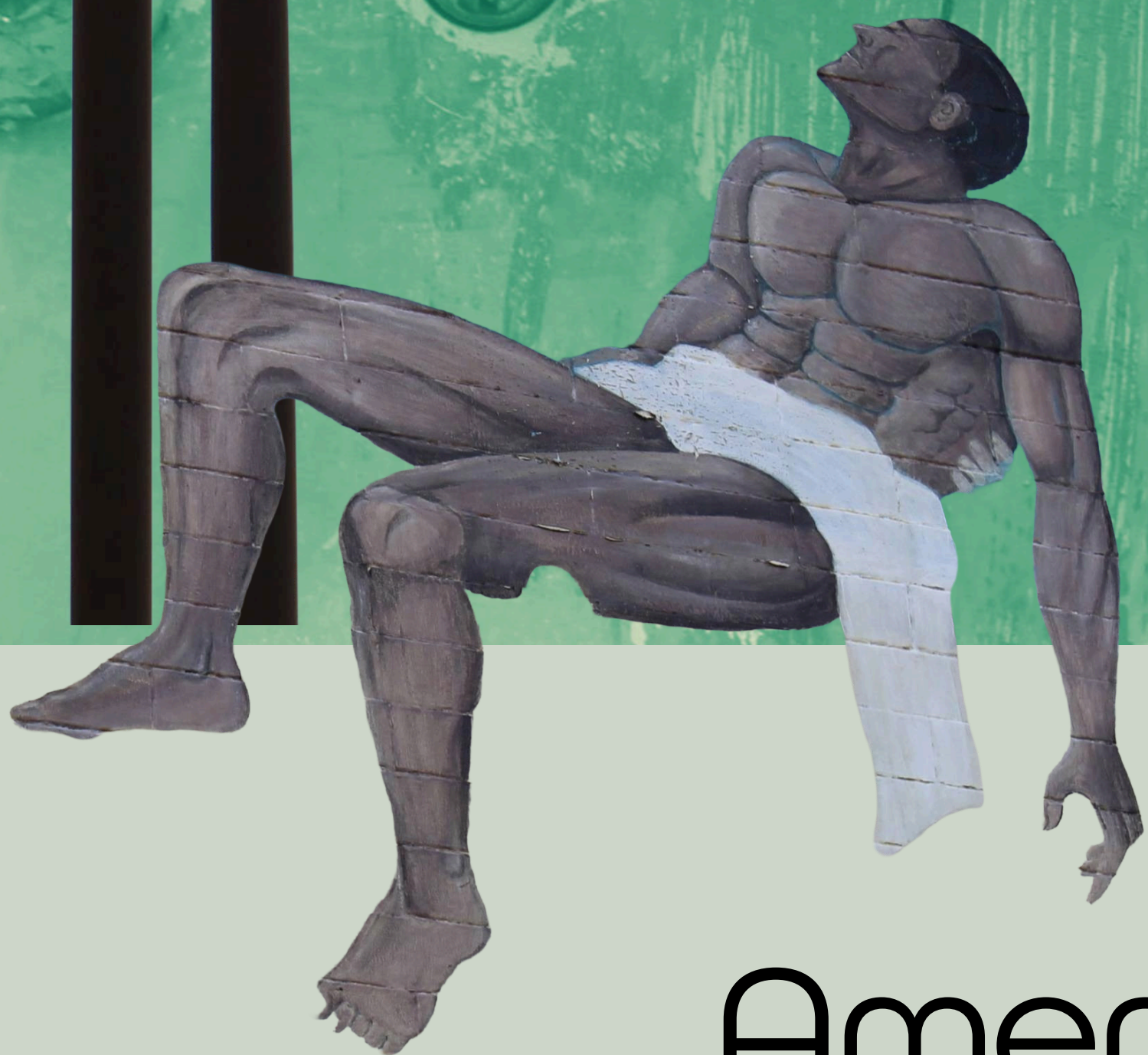


100 YEARS OF DEVOTION

a history zine

1926-2026

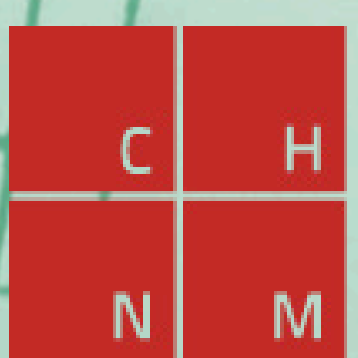
DO
WHAT'S
RIGHT



American Religious
Ecologies Project

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

This year marks the one hundredth anniversary of the 1926 Religious Bodies Census, which documented 227,700+ active religious congregations in the United States in one calendar year. While not every religious group was accounted for equally, this resource is invaluable to scholars of early twentieth-century American religious life. To demonstrate the possibilities of this resource, new research is being conducted at the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media, focused on understanding Washington, DC's religious ecology in 1926, using the Religious Bodies Census as a guide. Read on to learn about the current findings and ongoing research...



**Roy Rosenzweig Center
for History and New Media**



College of Humanities and Social Sciences
**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
AND ART HISTORY**
George Mason University®

For Washington, DC, there are 399 census schedules for religious bodies.

They look like this.

Each schedule has information about the individual congregation, including the number of their members (divided into categories of gender + age), whether the group owned their building, clerical details, and other relevant information.

DC is only 61 square miles, but the schedules document a diverse religiosity in the nation's capital city: Jews, Catholics, Quakers, Black Baptists, Spiritualists, Bahá'ís, Lutherans, Presbyterians and numerous others are scattered across all 8 wards.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS
WASHINGTON

5972 DEC 20 1926

060

UNITED STATES CENSUS OF RELIGIOUS BODIES
SCHEDULE: 1926

FILL OUT A SEPARATE SCHEDULE FOR EACH CHURCH. SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON THE BACK OF THIS SHEET

a. Denomination *Baptist*
b. Association or Conference *North & South Baptist Convention / Columbia Association*
c. Local name of church *Church of the Redeemer - Italian Baptist*
d. City, town, village, or township, etc. *Washington* e. County *D.C.* f. State *D.C.*

MEMBERSHIP
Report number of members according to definition of member in your church

Number of members, by sex:
1. Male *34*
2. Female *35*
3. Total number of members *69*
4. Under 13 years of age *0*
5. 13 years old and over *69*
6. Total number of members *69*

CHURCH BUILDINGS
See instructions, paragraphs 10 to 12

7. Number of church edifices *one*
8. Value of church edifices \$ *45,000.00*
9. Debt on church edifices \$ *8,500.00*
10. Does church own pastor's residence *NB*
11. Value of pastor's residence (if owned by church) \$
12. Debt on pastor's residence (if owned by church) \$

EXPENDITURES
Amount expended by your church during last fiscal year

13. Amount expended for salaries, repairs, and other running expenses; for improvements or new buildings; and for payments on church debt \$ *5,005.00*
14. Amount expended for benevolences, including home and foreign missions; for denominational support; and for all other purposes \$ *3,500.00*
15. Total expenditures during year \$ *5,355.00*

CHURCH SCHOOLS
Report here only schools conducted by this church

Sunday schools:
16. Number of officers and teachers *14*
17. Number of scholars *89*
Summer vacation Bible schools:
18. Number of officers and teachers
19. Number of scholars
Week-day religious schools:
20. Number of officers and teachers
21. Number of scholars
Parochial schools:
22. Number of administrative officers
23. Number of teachers—
a. Elementary (grades 1 to 8)
b. Secondary
24. Number of scholars—
a. Elementary (grades 1 to 8)
b. Secondary

PASTOR
25. Name of pastor *Rev. Mr. C. Marsaglia*
(If church has no pastor, write "None")
26. Number of ordained ministers, if any, employed as assistant pastors
27. Number of other churches served by the pastor or his assistants.
If pastor (or assistant pastor) is a graduate of a college or theological seminary, give name of institution below. (If not a graduate, write "No" in the space indicated.)
Pastor: *3*
28. College *Licium of Maddaloni (Italy)*
29. Theological seminary
Assistant pastor:
30. College
31. Theological seminary

NOTE.—Where one pastor serves two or more churches, Questions 28 and 29 should be answered only on the schedule for one of the churches; on the schedules for the other churches, write "See schedule for _____ church."

Signature of person furnishing information *off. C. Marsaglia*
Official title *Pastor*
Date *December 18th*, 1926
P. O. Address *2856-28th St. N.W. Washington, D.C.*

And sometimes they are hard to read!



SO WHAT DO WE KNOW SO FEAR?



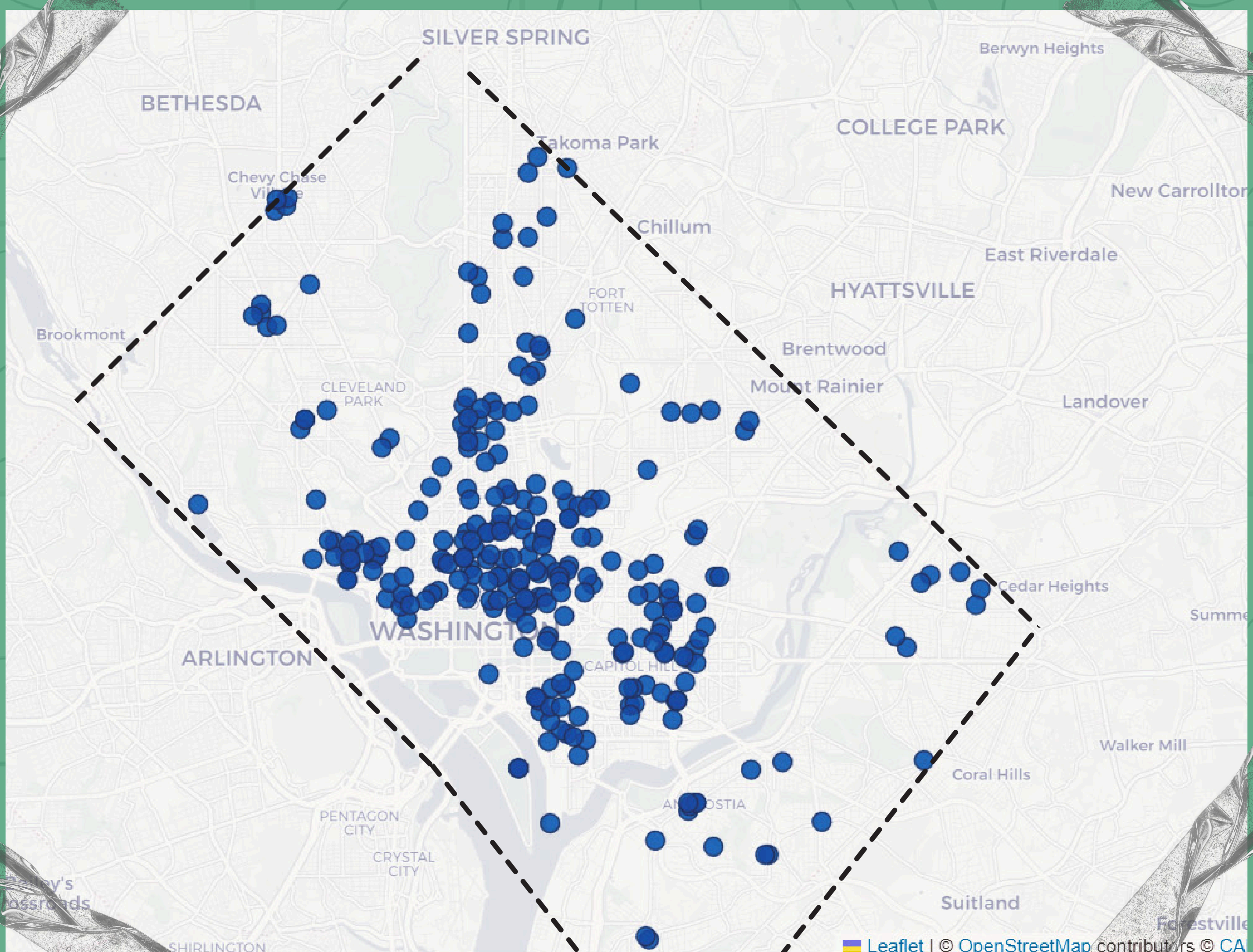
All photographs in this zine were taken by Shae Corey and depict religious congregations around the District.

In 1926, Washington, DC was predominantly Christian and the community was strictly partitioned by racial and ethnic boundaries. Washington, DC's highest ranked denomination by number of churches in the state was the "Negro Baptist" denomination. The U.S. Census Bureau used "Negro Baptist" to broadly categorize Black Baptist communities. Washington, DC's population was 25% Black in 1920, and "Negro Baptists" comprised the single largest number of congregations counted by the Census Bureau. Segregation in the city was "uneven and quirky" and oriented around "unwritten customs rather than formal laws."

When states were analyzed and ranked based on the number of recorded members in existing churches, Washington, DC was listed as being predominantly Roman Catholic (67,348), followed by Negro Baptist (41,262), and Protestant Episcopal (28,347). It is important to note that within these categories, race and ethnicity are not noted. In the official census publication, it is written that "no effort was made to enumerate the individual Negro members belonging to local white churches." This leaves a question mark in the ongoing research regarding racial and ethnic delineations in the data.

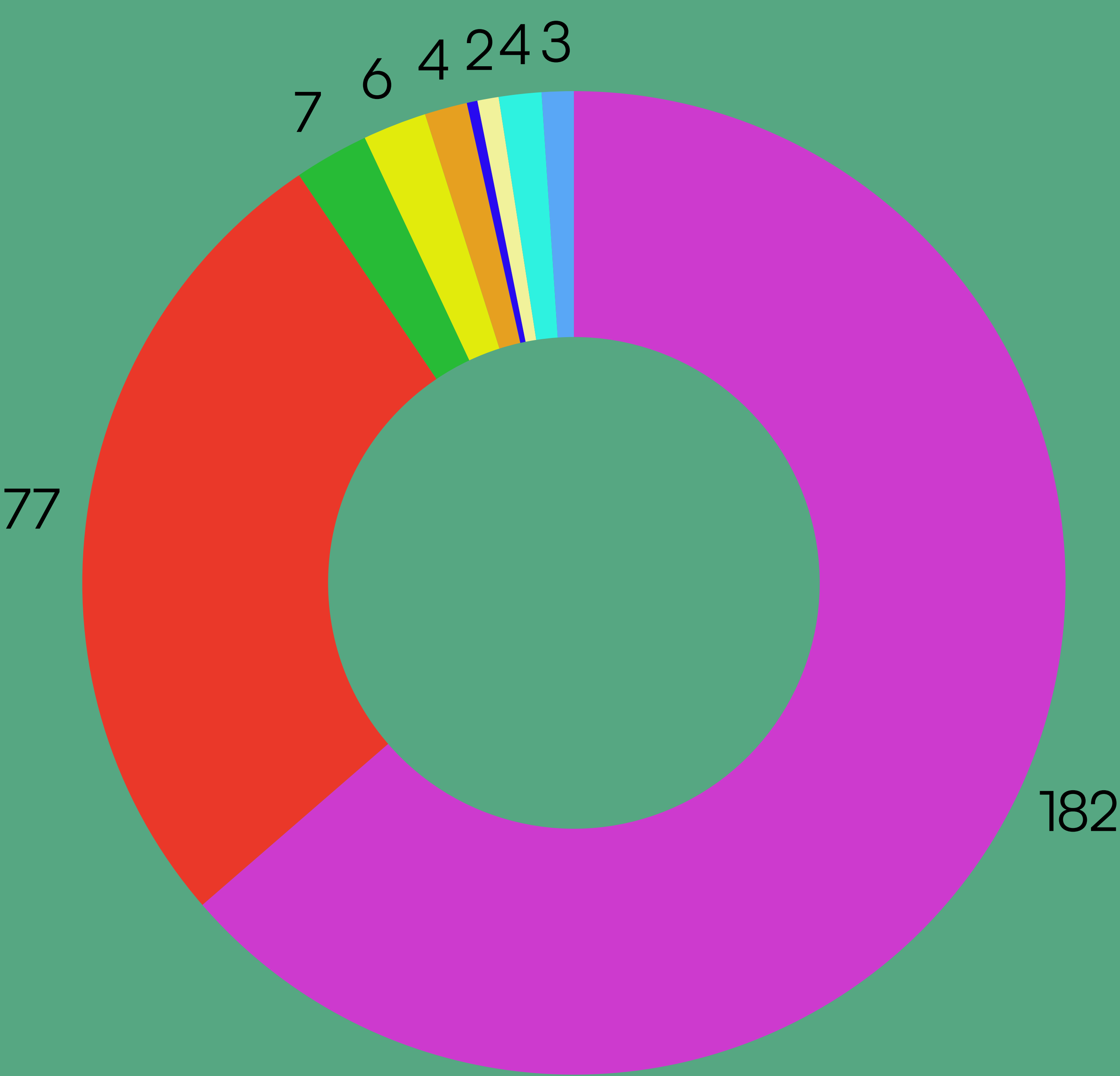
Over the past 100 years, DC's physical, racial, and religious landscape has changed tremendously. Many historic religious institutions have either shut down, moved locations, or merged with fellow congregations. Data on religious institutions is important because it provides information on urban change in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and can show trends in gentrification, federal expansion, and commercial development.

Out of the 399 churches recorded in 1926, the American Religious Ecologies Project has located the street addresses of 286 of the religious bodies in the city.

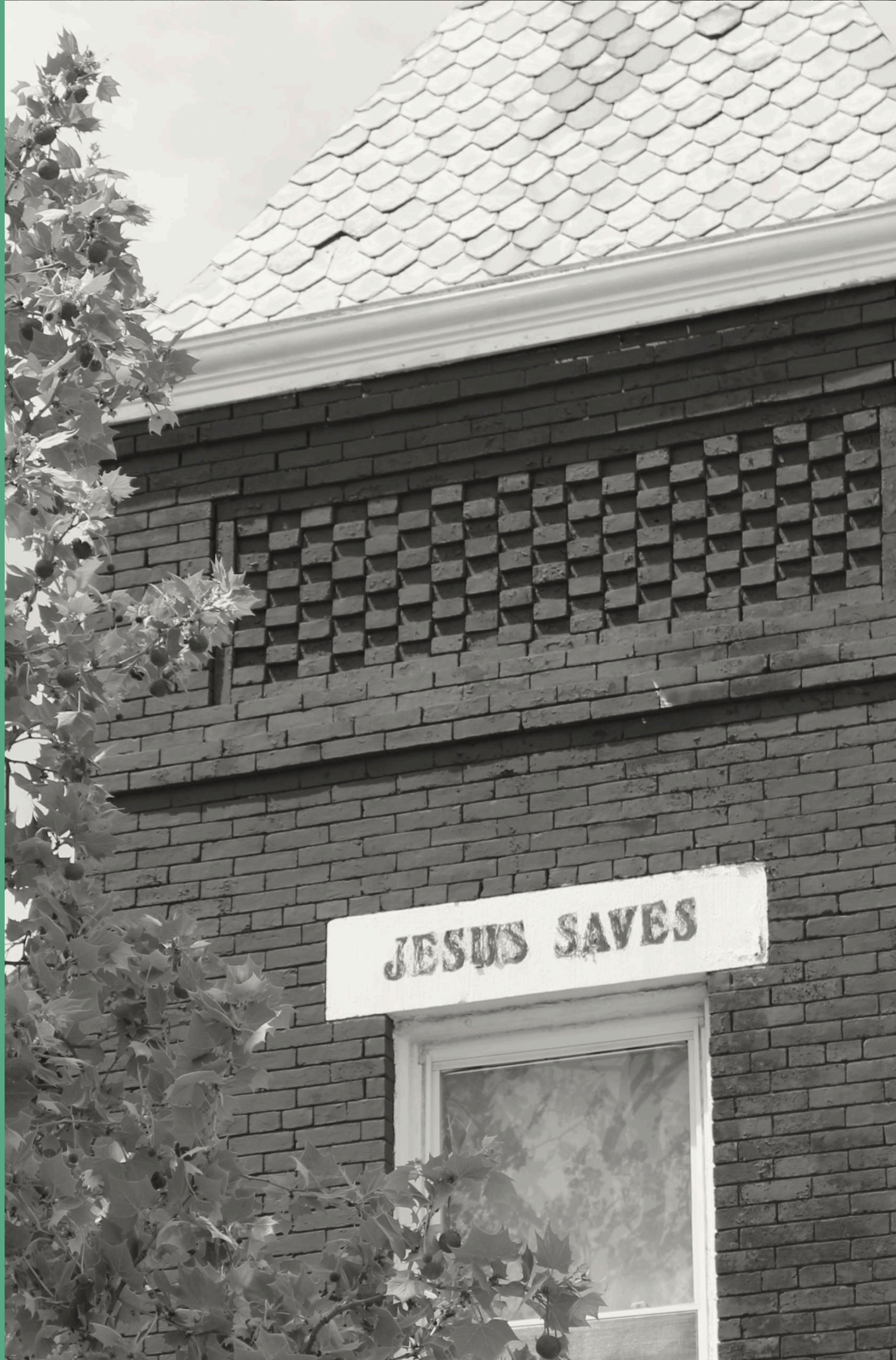


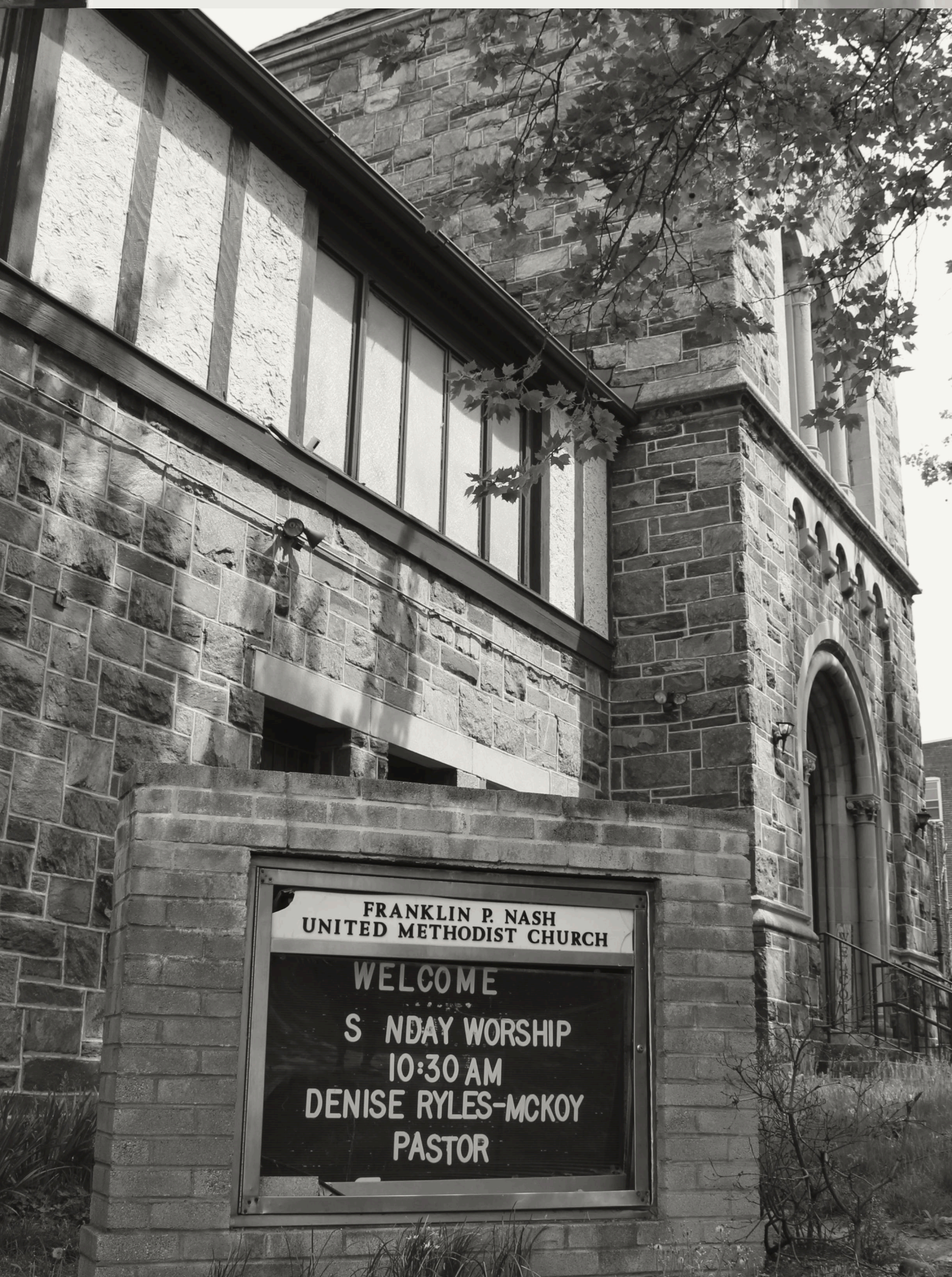
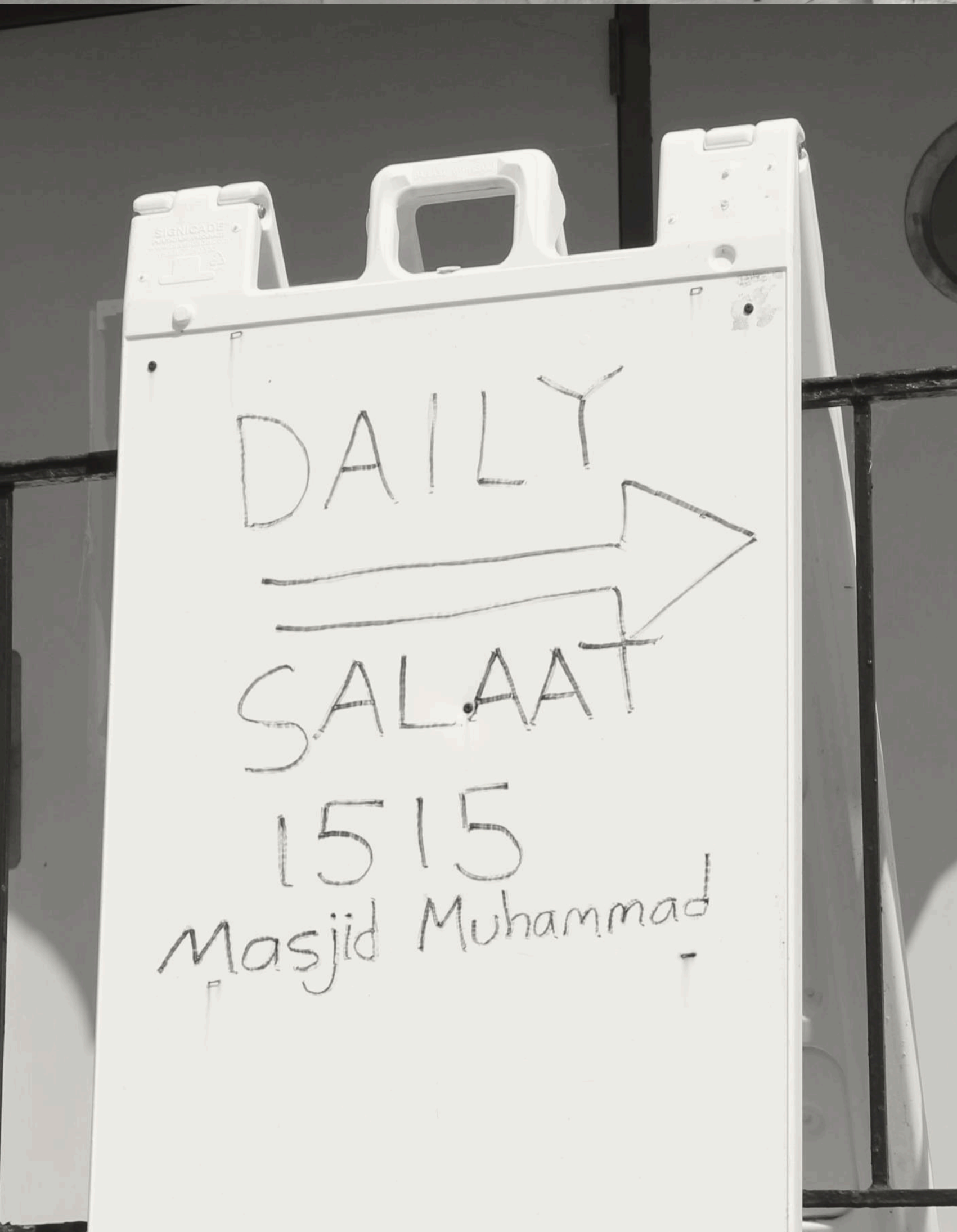
This map shows the geographic location of each individual religious group in 1926. Clusters of religious groups are visible in the oldest and most developed, centralized neighborhoods of Washington, DC. It also shows outliers near the border in the less developed areas of DC in the 1920s. Future versions of the map will filter by denomination and show various historical trends in the religious ecology of the city.

Of the 286 religious institutions, the majority of the structures and their original sites remain in-use.



- In-Use for Religious Purposes
- Demolished
- Private Residence
- Condominium
- School/University
- Hotel
- Apartment
- Vacant
- Commercial Use





Religious structures are not simply buildings, but sites of communal expression, familial tradition, and intergenerational networks. Within a heavily preserved city like Washington, DC, these physical buildings can often be given a second life, either with a new congregation, or as a new social space such as a school, hotel, or apartment complex.

For congregants who have spent decades worshipping in the same space, losing access to their building can be incredibly painful. From 1926 to 2026, many religious groups have been forced to move locations, either through internal troubles like financial concerns, or through external factors, like urban renewal, mass commercial development, and gentrification.

Documenting and analyzing the history of these historic religious groups is incredibly important for the congregants, but also for understanding the larger story of Washington, DC. The District's religious institutions have contributed to the city's architecture, established school systems, hosted presidents, developed childcare programs, championed affordable housing, and provided innumerable forms of charity to the community. These contributions should be recognized and contextualized in the broader urban history of the city.

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READ ME

Curious about Washington, DC's religious history? Read this short zine to learn more! Or visit the creators online...

American Religious Ecologies Project

www.religousecologies.org

Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media

www.rrchnm.org

Shae Corey

www.shaecorey.com