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At new Mormon temple, 'the finest materials, the finest craftsmanship, to stand forever'

A large and commanding portrait of Jesus, his face aglow, his arms extended in a welcoming embrace, will greet the faithful who enter the new Mormon Temple, opening its doors in Center City next month.



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Published Aug 1, 2016

A large and commanding portrait of Jesus, his face aglow, his arms extended in a welcoming embrace, will greet the faithful who enter the new Mormon Temple, opening its doors in Center City next month.

The granite-clad, Federalist-style building near Logan Square will serve as the site of sacramental rituals, or "ordinances," for the region's 41,000 Mormons.

"We believe our temples to be the house of the Lord," Elder Larry Y. Wilson, executive director of temple development for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, said at the start of a media tour Monday.

"So they are built of the finest materials, with the finest craftsmanship, to stand forever," he said.

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Called the Philadelphia Pennsylvania Temple, it will be open to the public for tours between Aug. 10 and Sept. 9, after which it can be entered only by Mormons in good standing with the church. A formal dedication ceremony is scheduled for Sept. 18.

In planning since 2008, the temple will serve members in Central and Southern New Jersey, Eastern Pennsylvania, all of Delaware, and northern Maryland. Until now, they have had to travel to temples in Washington or Manhattan to be married in the church or take part in special



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baptisms.

Mormons gather for worship on Sundays in their neighborhood churches, where children are traditionally baptized by full immersion at age 8.

While identical in function to the world's 151 other Mormon temples - and topped, as usual, by a gilded Angel Moroni - the new building at 17th and Vine Streets is visually unique, said Wilson.

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To the right of the painting of Jesus at the entrance - it's a copy, found in many other Mormon temples - is a framed image that visitors won't see at the others: an original oil painting of the signing of the Constitution, with Ben Franklin crouched in the foreground, pen in hand.

"This temple is different in many ways from our other temples," said Wilson. "We believe the hand of God was very much manifest in the events of 1776," in part because the religious freedom that sprung from the American Revolution has allowed their sometimes controversial faith to prosper.

And because the faith's first prophet, Joseph Smith, is said to have translated large parts of the Book of Mormon in Susquehanna County, starting in the 1820s, and was baptized there, the new building visually references both colonial Philadelphia and the state's rural areas.

The large brass or crystal chandeliers and much of the



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Church, and images of mountain laurel blossoms, the Pennsylvania state flower, appear in some carpets and decorative moulding.

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In the baptistery - where Mormons in good standing may baptize their non-Mormon ancestors into the faith - the large baptismal font resting atop 12 full-size carved oxen is surrounded by a sweeping mural of Smith being baptized in the Susquehanna.

"I don't know of any other temple that depicts Joseph Smith's baptism," said Wilson.

The temple's lower floors contain changing rooms for those engaging in the special baptisms, and instruction rooms where members may learn and deepen their commitment to their faith.

The grandest room of all, on the third floor, is the "celestial room." Flooded with natural light from a giant paneled window and the lantern of its high domed ceiling, it also features an enormous crystal chandelier under which visitors may sit in chairs or on sofas to meditate.

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Calling it "a place of obvious beauty," Wilson described it as the "culminating point" of the temple, where the devout are invited to sense that "they have been admitted to the presence of God."

But the fourth and topmost floor contains what may be this building's - and Mormonism's - most potent expression of belief.

Here, in the "sealing rooms" where bride and groom exchange vows (the church does not conduct same-sex rites), they rise from the low altar to see themselves reflected and re-reflected unto infinity in mirrors set on opposite walls.

It is a conscious metaphor for the eternity of togetherness that the rapidly growing faith offers its 15 million members, who are taught they not only lived with God before they were born but may ultimately become the god of their own divine realm.

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Adopted children, and those born before their parents joined the faith, also "seal" with them in this ordinance.



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In Philadelphia, voters will pick their party nominees for district attorney, city controller, and a slew of judicial seats.

Updated an hour ago

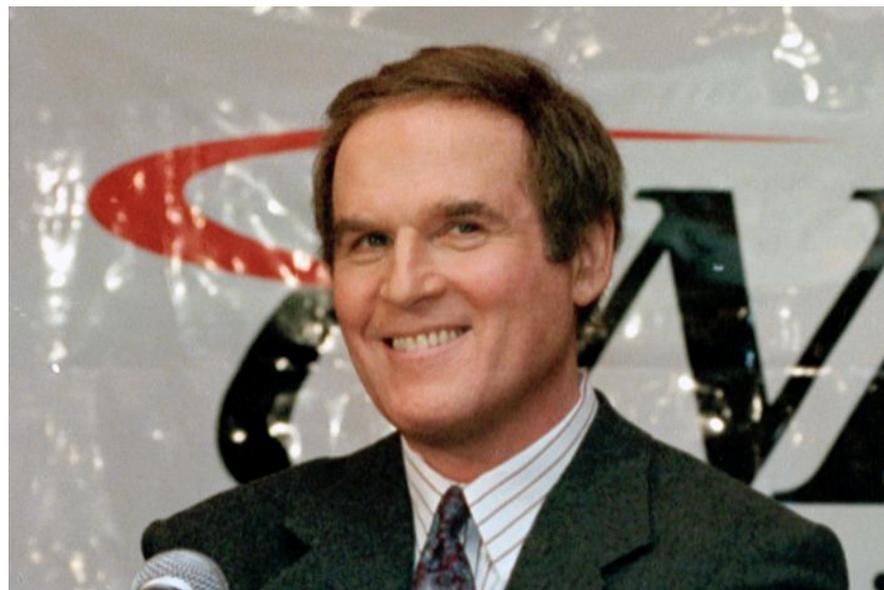
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Charles Grodin, star of 'Midnight Run' and 'Heartbreak Kid,' has died

Mr. Grodin died Tuesday at his home in Wilton, Conn. from bone marrow cancer, said his son, Nicholas.

Jake Coyle, The Associated Press 2 hours ago

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Frank Kummer 2 hours ago

Meg: Megan Griffith-Greene
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It's actually not ethical to ask whether or not someone has been vaccinated (but no, it doesn't violate HIPAA).

Thoughtful piece here by @EWellingtonPHL
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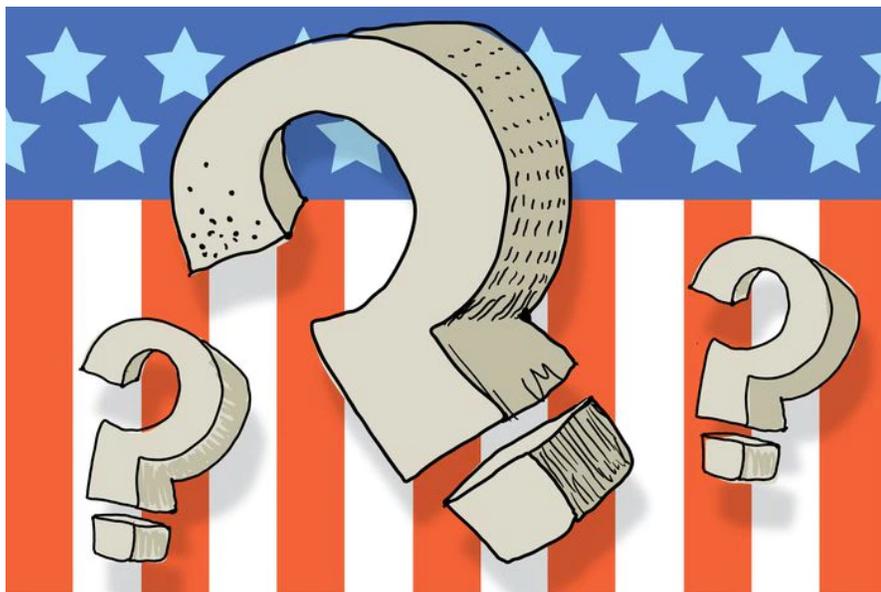


No, you shouldn't ask for someone's vaccination status. Here's what to do instead. | Elizabeth Wellington

Elizabeth Wellington May 17, 2021

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YOUR GUIDE TO THE MAY 18 PRIMARY



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Strike from Gaza kills 2 after Israel topples a 6-story building

Also, Palestinians across Israel and the occupied territories went on strike in a rare collective action against Israel's policies.

Fares Akram and Joseph Krauss, The Associ... 2 hours ago

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Elections



Tonight will probably feel like a normal election in Pa. That's not because everything is fixed.



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N.C. deputies' fatal shooting of a Black man was justified, prosecutor says

District Attorney Andrew Womble said Andrew Brown Jr. ignored deputies' commands to stop and began to drive his car toward two of the officers.

Ben Finley, The Associated Press 3 hours ago

National Politics





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Delaware County sues chemical makers over PFAS contamination at three fire facilities

The Delaware County D.A. has filed a civil complaint against chemical manufacturers for what it says is their role in contaminating a local fire station and two training facilities.

 Frank Kummer 5 hours ago

Health





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EJ Smith
@EJSmith94

.@LesBowen took a trip to DeVonta Smith's hometown to give us all a detailed look at how the people around the #Eagles' first-round pick helped him get to where he is now. Excellent story here: [inquirer.com/eagles/eagles-...](https://www.inquirer.com/eagles/eagles-...)



DeVonta Smith's character was forged from his mom's values in a tiny Louisiana town
Les Bowen May 18, 2021

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Amid threats to members, the House will vote on new security measures

U.S. Capitol Police say that threats to members of Congress have more than doubled this year.

Mary Clare Jalonick, The Associated Pr... 6 hours ago

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And, one on one with the Eagles' rookie wide receiver.

Ashley Hoffman May 18, 2021

Business





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Penn State students are tackle the issue of period poverty on their own campus

A campus-wide survey found 13% of students who menstruate have skipped class or work because they didn't have access to period products at Penn State.



Bethany Ao May 18, 2021

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These 60 teachers have been named Philly's best

The 2021 Lindback Award for Distinguished Teaching comes with a \$3,500 prize, but more importantly, it comes with public recognition for difficult, important work that changes children's lives.



Kristen A. Graham May 18, 2021

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Murphy says New Jersey pupils will be school in September.

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Girl, 6, wounded by stray bullet in West Philly

The shooting happened around 3:40 p.m. on the 3800 block of Wyalusing Avenue.



Robert Moran May 17, 2021