

Celebrating CELEBRATING INDEPENDENCE DAY *Independence Day*

This summer we celebrate America's 229th birthday. It's a wonderful thing. With stubborn courage, enduring moral and physical hardships most 21st century Americans would find it difficult to grasp our forebears somehow found within themselves the wherewithal to conceive a magnificent dream. A dream of self-determination, of a democratically governed republic, of a dream of a nation where nearly anything is possible. And in the more than two centuries since that dream was first imagined, countless people from every remote reach of our planet have made their way to the America of their dreams, to pick up the mantle of our heritage and accomplish things, big and small, that just might bring smiles of satisfaction to those early patriots.

Whether your ancestors stumbled off the Mayflower, or were already here when those first pilgrims arrived, or you are the first in your family to make your way here, you know individual effort is not enough. We all rely on others to support us in achieving our dreams. On our family and friends, our communities, our church, on God. And others rely on us. Through shared work, giving of resources and money, offerings of love and friendship, through prayer and worship, we are inextricably linked. Americans have a long history of working together to build our communities and of reaching out around the world when we see need. In addition to the social and political freedoms and opportunities we celebrate on July 4th, it is this culture of responsibility to those we live with here on earth that we honor.

Throughout the Bible we are shown how we are expected to treat one another, especially those whose need is greater than our own, to care for each other as we would care for Jesus himself. During our lives we do what we can to support the work of our church in service of these instructions. Across the country, ministries feed and shelter the hungry and homeless, care for the sick, provide educational opportunities, support arts and cultural events, promote positive inter-faith relations, and many other important projects. And the outreach missions of our church extend far beyond America to serve the needs of people on every continent.

What would it mean to you to be able to continue your support of the causes most important to you, even after you've gone? As we celebrate the independence of our nation, it is important for us also to recall our responsibility to the heritage of our predecessors, and consider the legacy we ourselves would like to leave for future generations. By making a bequest in your will, or a planned gift to your church or one of its ministries, you are making a statement about your values, enabling important work in service of others to continue, and demonstrating the generous spirit of our country.

For more information about making a bequest or planned gift to your church, contact a planned giving committee member or the Episcopal Church Foundation at 800-697-2858 or www.EpiscopalFoundation.org for confidential advice. And while you watch the fireworks this year, consider how history pays itself forward in your life. Happy Independence Day.