

GOD BLESS AMERICA

*A Service of the Word
For the Sunday after Independence Day
July 5, 2020*



ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH
85 East Brandt Boulevard
Landisville, PA 17538

*“United in Christ, we are called
to love and serve.”*

GOD BLESS AMERICA

A Service of the Word

For the Sunday after Independence Day



Independence Day honors the birthday of the United States of America and the adoption of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. It's a day of picnics and patriotic parades during "normal" times. It's also a night for concerts (once again in normal" times) and fireworks, and a reason to fly the American flag. It is a day to worship together, giving thanks for the many gifts with which our native land has been blessed ... freedom, wealth, strength, happiness, clean water, food, and trustworthy Americans and allies.

FACTS ABOUT THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

Drafted by Thomas Jefferson between June 11 and June 28, 1776, the Declaration of Independence is the nation's most cherished symbol of liberty. Jefferson expressed the convictions in the minds and hearts of the American people. The political philosophy of the Declaration was not new; its ideals of individual liberty had already been expressed by John Locke and the Continental philosophers. What Jefferson did was to summarize this philosophy in "self-evident truths" and set forth a list of grievances against the King in order to justify before the world the breaking of ties between the colonies and the mother country.

Note: While Independence Day does not fall within the Church Year calendar as a festival to be observed, it is nonetheless appropriate that something be done within the liturgy of this holiday weekend to give thanks for the freedoms we share in this great land, including the freedom to worship. (The Rev. Thomas L. Weitzel, ELCA)

GOD BLESS AMERICA

*A Service of the Word
For the Sunday after Independence Day*



P: Pastor A: Assisting Minister C: Congregation & Pastor

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

A MUSICAL TRIBUTE (Piano)

*O Beautiful for Spacious Skies
My Country, 'Tis of Thee
God Bless America*



† THE PEOPLE OF GOD GATHER †

THE OPENING LITANY

(Interspersed with verses of God Bless Our Native Land)

P: Heavenly Father, you have drawn the borders of your earth and empowered its leaders.

C: Come and be with us, O God most high.

P: Lord Jesus Christ, through your death and resurrection you have made us citizens of the Kingdom of God.

C: Come and be with us, O saving Lord.

P: Holy Spirit, you guide us in your way as we live here on earth, leading us, at last, to eternal life.

C: Make us obedient children of God and faithful citizens here below.

P: Almighty God,

C: Bless our native land! Amen.

The people of God may join in singing the following verse from their home.

**God bless our native land;
Firm may it ever stand through storm and night.
When the wild tempests rave,
Ruler of wind and wave,
Do thou our country save by thy great might.**

P: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”
We come in spiritual poverty.

C: Lead us, O Lord, to your heavenly kingdom.

P: “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”

**C: We come mourning lost love, lost time, lost hope. Comfort us,
Lord of love.**

The people of God may join in singing the following verse from their home.

**My native country, thee,
Land of the noble free, Thy name I love;
I love thy rocks and rills,
Thy woods and templed hills;
My heart with rapture thrills like that above.**

P: “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.”

**C: We come in humility, knowing that without your grace we are
dust. Raise us from dust, O Lord, that we may receive your
promised inheritance.**

P: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they
will be filled.”

**C: We come dry and empty. Quench our thirst, O Lord, and fill us
with your grace.**

The people of God may join in singing the following verse from their home.

**Let music swell the breeze,
And ring from all the trees fre-e-dom's song;
Let mortal tongues awake;
Let all that breathe partake;
Let rocks their silence break, the sound prolong.**

P: "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy."

C: **We come as recipients of your great mercy. Make us, O Lord, a merciful people.**

P: "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom heaven."

C: **We come as a people at odds with the world. Keep us mindful of our true citizenship, O Lord.**

The people of God may join in singing the following verse from their home.

**Our fathers' God, to thee
Author of liberty, to thee we sing:
Long may our land be bright
With freedom's holy light.
Protect us by thy might, Great God, our King.**

P: "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account."

C: **We rejoice and are glad, for our reward is great in heaven!**

The people of God may join in singing the following verse from their home.

**So shall our prayers arise
To God above the skies, on whom we wait.
Thou who art ever nigh, guarding with watchful eye,
To thee aloud we cry: God save this land.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: Let us pray. Most Holy God, through the wisdom of our forefathers, who envisioned a land of liberty and fought for freedom, this nation has been built upon a firm foundation – "conceived in liberty, and

dedicated to the proposition that all humankind are created equal.” Through your grace, O God, your people, the Church, are built upon the strong foundation of your Word. Make us a light in the darkness, that all may see our good works and give glory to our Father in heaven. Through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

† THE PEOPLE OF GOD HEAR GOD’S WORD †

FIRST READING

Deuteronomy 6:1-12

A: A reading from Deuteronomy.

[Moses said:] Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the ordinances—that the Lord your God charged me to teach you to observe in the land that you are about to cross into and occupy, so that you and your children and your children’s children, may fear the Lord your God all the days of your life, and keep all his decrees and his commandments that I am commanding you, so that your days may be long. Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe them diligently, so that it may go well with you, and so that you may multiply greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, as The Lord, the God of your ancestors, has promised you.

Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. When the Lord your God has brought you into the land that he swore to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you—a land with fine, large cities that you did not build, houses filled with all sorts of goods that you did not fill, hewn cisterns that you did not hew, vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant—and when you have eaten your fill, take care that you do not forget the

Lord, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

A: The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING

1 Peter 2:1-10

A: A reading from 1 Peter.

[Peter spoke saying:] Rid yourselves, therefore, of all malice, and all guile, insincerity, envy, and all slander. Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation— if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in scripture: "See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner," and "A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

A: The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Halle, Halle, Hallelujah

ELW 172

Halle, halle, hallelujah.
Halle, halle, hallelujah.
Halle, halle, hallelujah.
Hallelujah. Hallelujah.
(Repeat once)

GOSPEL READING

Matthew 7:21-29

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 7th chapter.

C: **Glory to you, O Lord.**

[Jesus teaches:] “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?’ Then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers.’ “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!” Now when Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

P: The Gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Pastor Barbara Caruana

***Grace and peace to you from
God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen.***

P: If I were to give today’s sermon a title, which most Lutheran pastor’s don’t do, I would call it, “*God Bless Our Native Land.*” And you know what else? I could amaze you and deliver a three-word sermon in response to that title. And that response would be, “He has! Amen.”

Now, as you have probably guessed, you’re not going to get that quickie three-word sermon. Oh, it would be a fitting sermon, be as we celebrate our independence and the birth of our nation, it is important for us to look back and see that God has answered that prayer. God

has blessed this nation richly. Even as we're embroiled in the COVID-19 pandemic and even when economic times are not the best, God *has* blessed this native land and *is* blessing our nation. Although we don't always think so, we are wealthier than most, stronger than most, and happier than most. We have freedom. We strive for equality. We have more clean water than most, and our grocery store shelves, although not at full capacity right now, are beginning to look more normal.

One great blessing that our Lord has given our nation is a firm foundation. In documents like the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights, our forefathers, with wisdom and foresight, took a vision ... a dream really, and mapped out a way for it to actually work.

If you've ever watched the movie or seen the play *1776*, which is a humorous musical rendition of the historical events and characters that framed the Declaration of Independence, you know the struggle it was to do what no people had ever done before – to break from their mother country and form a new nation.

What's interesting, as you watch the tale unfold, is that these people are far from perfect. There are passions ... emotions ... rivalries ... egos ... jealousies ... hatreds, and even brawls ... not unlike today. Greed raises its ugly head more than once. So does hopelessness, drunkenness, regionalism, racism, and slavery. Martin Luther would have been quick to point out that the members of the Second Continental Congress, just like all of us, were sinners ... and saints. But despite their human frailties, they had vision, wisdom, courage (after all, they were committing capital treason!), and the wherewithal to get things done. Their discussions, even their arguments, were important ones. They had to get this right. And out of the cauldron of that Philadelphia summer something beautiful was born. The American Eagle was hatched!

James Michener's masterful, and blessedly short, historical novel entitled *The Legacy*, similarly recounts the history of the framing of the Constitution. Again, the cast of characters is broad. We see them

with their warts exposed. But their accomplishment is astounding – the framework for a system of government that’s both strong and pliable, with checks and balances that ensure justice, foster democracy, and prevent tyranny. More than two hundred forty years after its inception, the Constitution still stands as the basic blueprint for democracy world-wide.

What an absolute blessing God has given our nation by providing such a firm foundation.

Of course, God would know a thing or two about providing firm foundations! He has given his children, the Church, the firm foundation of his Word!

Today’s reading from Deuteronomy highlights the binding power of God’s Word for the ancient children of Israel. It was the Word of God, the laws and the ordinances, that bound the Israelites together, and separated them from other nations. Moses insists these laws and ordinances, these words of God, are so important that people should recite them to their children and talk about them when they are at home and when they rise. These words are to be bound as a sign on their hand, fixed as an emblem on their forehead, and written on the doorposts of their homes. God’s word was and is the firm foundation for God’s nation.

St. Peter applies the same wisdom to the Church. We’re building upon the foundation of God’s word ... the Living Word, Jesus Christ. Peter, the man who was renamed the Rock by Christ, says this “living stone is the cornerstone on which we’re to build ourselves: “Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God’s sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ ... and remember ... whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.

So what’s the result of all this? The result is that what’s built is something new: “... you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty

acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you weren't a people, but now you're God's people; once you hadn't received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Built on the foundation of Christ, we are a new race, a new priesthood, a new nation. God's Word is the firm foundation for God's Church.

And Jesus makes it even more personal. His words are to be the foundation for our own lives. Built on that rock, we will survive any storm life can throw at us. In fact, we'll survive any storm death can throw at us. Our Lord, in his death and resurrection, has ensured that! Christ's Word is the firm foundation for you and for me ... every single day.

Of course, to build on God's Word, you need to know it. So, dig into Scripture. Study it. Enjoy it. As it sinks into your mind, your life will sink roots into it, and none of life's storms will destroy you.

It might also be a good idea to grab a copy of the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and the Bill of Rights. Read through them. Learn from them. Enjoy them. Let their words sink in and take root.

And then, thank God for blessing his people and this native land with something truly special: a firm foundation on which each and every one of us can all stand.

And to that I say, "Thanks be to God."

Amen!

HYMN OF THE DAY

How Firm a Foundation

ELW 796

**How firm a foundation, O saints of the Lord,
Is laid for your faith in Christ Jesus, the Word!
What more can he say than to you he has said
Who unto the Savior for refuge have fled?**



**“Fear not, I am with you, oh, be not dismayed,
For I am your God and will still give you aid;
I’ll strengthen you, help you, and cause you to stand,
Upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand.”**

**“When through fi- ‘ry trials your pathway shall lie,
My grace, all sufficient, shall be your supply.
The flames shall not hurt you; I only design
Your dross to consume and your gold to refine.”**

**“Throughout all their lifetime my people shall prove
My sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love;
And then, when gray hairs shall their temples adorn,
Like lambs they shall still in my bosom be borne.”**

APOSTLES’ CREED

P: We confess our faith with the words of the Apostles’ Creed.

C: **I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**

I believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYERS IN RECOGNITION OF INDEPENDENCE DAY

A: Almighty God, you have provided this nation with forefathers who had vision, wisdom, patience, and courage. They provided us with frameworks that were “conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all humankind are created equal.” For the blessing of this firm foundation, we give you our thanks and praise.

Bless all nations with wise leadership, justice, plenty, and peace. Bring freedom and liberty to all corners of the world. Cause all warfare, chaos, hatred, and fear to cease. Lead us in paths of righteousness for your name's sake.

Free the needy of this world. Where there is hunger, grant feeding. Where there is sickness, grant healing. Where there is mourning, grant comfort. Where there is loneliness, grant love. May all lead to paths of righteousness.

On this Sunday after Independence Day, free all who mourn from their sorrow, and comfort them with the strong hope of the resurrection from the dead.

Gracious God, we ask that you accept these prayers we offer to you in the name of Jesus Christ, the one who taught us to pray together saying ...

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

† THE PEOPLE OF GOD OFFER A PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING †

P: God our Father, your Son Jesus spoke a message of peace and taught us to live as brothers and sisters. His message took form in the vision of our Founding Fathers, as they fashioned a nation where all people might live as one. This message lives on in our midst as a task for us today and a promise for tomorrow.

We thank you, Father, for your blessings of the past, and for all that, with your help, we must yet achieve. Bless our nation and bless each of us. Hasten the day when our nation will be a nation with liberty and justice, not just for some, but for all, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

† THE PEOPLE OF GOD ARE SENT FORTH †

HYMN

Let There Be Peace on Earth

Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.
Let there be peace on earth the peace that was meant to be.
With God as our father, family all are we.
Let me walk with my family, in perfect harmony.

Let peace begin with me, let this be the moment now.
With every step I take, let this be my solemn vow.
To take each moment and live each moment with peace eternally ...
Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.

Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.
Let there be peace on earth the peace that was meant to be.
With God as our father, family all are we.
Let me walk with my family, in perfect harmony.

Let peace begin with me; let this be the moment now.
With every step I take, let this be my solemn vow.
To take each moment and live each moment in peace eternally ...
Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.

BLESSING

P: Friends in Christ: You are built up upon the foundation of God's word.
May the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face shine
on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favor and
grant you peace. Amen.

HYMN

The Star Spangled Banner

Francis Scott Key

O say can you see, by the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming,
Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight
O'er the ramparts we watched were so gallantly streaming?



**And the rocket's red glare, the bomb bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there,
O say does that star-spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?**

**O thus be it ever when freemen shall stand
Between their loved home and the war's desolation!
Blest with vict'ry and peace may the heav'n rescued land
Praise the power that hath made and preserv'd us a nation!
Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,
And this be our motto - "In God is our trust,"
And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.**

DISMISSAL

P: United in Christ, go forth to love and serve.

C: Amen.

PRAYER LIST

FOR HEALING

Adele King	Lucy Davis
Barbara Williams	Bill Grove
Dave Wise	Kay Crawford
Kevin Reinhart	Holly Hoover
Fred Hamor	Betty Stoner
Joe Adams	Don Heartter
Judie Ingersoll	
Janet & Harry Musselman	
Homer Dietz (Brother-in-law of Harry Musselman)	
Bob Steinmetz (Brother of Diane Gerlach)	
Ginny Eisenhauer (Sister of Dolly Overly)	
Ron Sahd (Friend of Dave Wise)	
Wilson Pipkin (Father of Wilson Pipkin)	
Loma Slike (Mother of Sue Wise)	
Mike LaFatta (Son-in-law of Bill & Julia Grove)	

FOR COMFORT, PEACE, STRENGTH, & SAFETY

Richard and Marilyn Heim	Charlotte & George Potts
Arlene Miller	Deb McCartney
Marlin Zimmerman	Bette Geibel
Jennifer Thompson	
Ted Symonds & Family	
The family and friends of Kim Propst	
The family and friends of Mary Grzybowski	
Anita Kolibas Engroff & Jeff on the death of her father, Robert Wee	
Residents and Staff of the Phoenixville Care & Rehabilitation Center	
Arlene Wise (Sister-in-law of Dave Wise)	
Vaun Hile (Father of Lynda Sherwood)	
Jennifer Kready (Daughter of Dave & Donna Dumeyer)	

FOR PROTECTION FOR MILITARY & FIRST RESPONDERS

Christopher Wright	Chris Andrew
Thom Whitesel	Ryan Stitzel
Justin Gorklaski	
Corey Landis (Nephew of Jesse & Pat Landis)	
David Adams (Son-in-law of John & Kathleen Hay, and husband of Liz)	