

Worship Service: July 4 (or closest Sunday)

Welcome: Welcome! It's so good to be together to celebrate faith and community today. My name is ____ and I'll be leading our worship time today. This week we're celebrating the Fourth of July, reminding us of the Revolutionary War that established our country. It's a time to give thanks in humility for the amazing gifts God has bestowed on us, including freedom and security, and to give thanks for God's eternal security.

Please pray with me as we open our time together.

Opening Prayer:

We lift up our hearts to you, O God, on this day of celebration, in gratitude for the gift of being here today.

We rejoice with all those who share in the great dream of freedom and dignity for all, because we are all made in your image.

We honor those who have sacrificed, that we might have the chance to live in freedom to worship you and serve humanity with our God-given gifts.

As we deny all prejudice a place in our hearts, may we also clearly declare our intention to work for the time when all people are granted equal dignity and worth.

Come, O gracious God, who led your children Israel from slavery—set us free from all that might hold us in bondage. We praise you, our eternal security, the One in whom we place our trust. Amen.

Opening Hymn: Doxology, p. 1

Statement of Faith: Let us affirm our statement of faith by reciting Psalm 23 together:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

² He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

³ He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

⁴ Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

⁵Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Hymns:

For the Beauty of the Earth, p. 2

Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us, p. 3

Amazing Grace, p. 4

First reading: “How Prayer Underpinned the American Revolution,” by Stephen Lynch, Franciscan Friars¹

The First Continental Congress ... met for the first time in September 1774. In a letter to his wife, John Adams described the spiritual backdrop as the colonies were about to launch the Revolutionary War for independence.

“When the Congress met, Mr. Cushing made a motion that it should be opened with prayer. It was opposed by [other delegates] because we were so divided in religious sentiments — some Episcopalians, some Quakers, some Anabaptists, some Presbyterians, and some Congregationalists — that we could not join in the same act of worship.

“Mr. Samuel Adams arose and said that he was no bigot, and could hear a prayer from any gentleman of piety and virtue who was at the same time a friend to his country. He moved that Mr. Duche, an Episcopal clergyman, might read prayers to Congress the next morning. The motion was seconded and passed.

“Accordingly, next morning the Rev. Duche appeared with his Episcopal vestments and read the 85th Psalm. I never saw a greater effect produced upon an audience. It seemed as if heaven had ordained that psalm to be read on that morning.

“George Washington was kneeling there, alongside him Patrick Henry, James Madison, and John Hancock. By their side there stood, bowed in reverence, the Puritan patriots of New England ... They prayed fervently for America, for Congress, and [for the colonies.]

¹ <https://hnp.org/history-reflection-for-4th-of-july-how-prayer-underpinned-american-independence/>

“And who can realize the emotions with which they turned imploringly to heaven for divine help. It was enough to melt a heart of stone. I saw the tears gush into the eyes of the old, grave, pacifist Quakers of Philadelphia.”

Hymns:

Holy, Holy, Holy, p. 5

Jesus Loves Me, p. 6

Second reading: Psalm 85

Lord, you were favorable to your land;
you restored the fortunes of Jacob.

²You forgave the iniquity of your people;
you covered all their sin.

³You withdrew all your wrath;
you turned from your hot anger.

⁴Restore us again, O God of our salvation,
and put away your indignation toward us!

⁵Will you be angry with us forever?
Will you prolong your anger to all generations?

⁶Will you not revive us again,
that your people may rejoice in you?

⁷Show us your steadfast love, O Lord,
and grant us your salvation.

⁸Let me hear what God the Lord will speak,
for he will speak peace to his people, to his saints;
but let them not turn back to folly.

⁹Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him,
that glory may dwell in our land.

¹⁰Steadfast love and faithfulness meet;
righteousness and peace kiss each other.

¹¹Faithfulness springs up from the ground,
and righteousness looks down from the sky.

¹²Yes, the Lord will give what is good,
and our land will yield its increase.

¹³Righteousness will go before him
and make his footsteps a way.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Hymns:

Softy and Tenderly, p. 7

Leaning on the Everlasting Arms, p. 8

Interactive Homily: Let's pause for a moment and think a little bit more about security.

- What does the word "security" mean to you?
- How do you feel when you are secure?
- What sorts of things keep us secure in this world? What sorts of things do we rely on for security?
 - Material well-being: wealth, prosperity, way of life
 - Our country's protective branches: police, fire fighters, coast guard, medical personnel
 - Our armed forces and military strength
- How reliable are these groups of people? Why are they reliable?
 - They have taken an oath to protect us, and we enjoy the fruits of that dedication and duty every single day.
- How much do we rely on them for security?
 - A lot! The service of those who protect us is something we often take for granted.
- What does the bible say about security? Let's look at some scripture:

Psalm 33: 16-21

¹⁶ The king is not saved by his great army;
a warrior is not delivered by his great strength.

¹⁷ The war horse is a false hope for salvation,
and by its great might it cannot rescue.

¹⁸ Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him,
on those who hope in his steadfast love,

¹⁹ that he may deliver their soul from death
and keep them alive in famine.

²⁰ Our soul waits for the Lord;
he is our help and our shield.

²¹ For our heart is glad in him,
because we trust in his holy name.

And Psalm 118: 5-9

Out of my distress I called on the Lord;
the Lord answered me and set me free.

⁶ The Lord is on my side; I will not fear.

What can man do to me?...

⁸ It is better to take refuge in the Lord
than to trust in man.

⁹ It is better to take refuge in the Lord
than to trust in princes.

- So according to the scriptures, what—or, better, Who—holds our eternal security? Who is the only one who can save?
- Can we rely eternally on our own goodness, our own might, our own way of life and its many blessings?
 - No—our final hope is in God alone.
 - As we give honor to our founding fathers and mothers on July 4, we remember *their* reliance on God, as they heard from Psalm 85: “Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him, that glory may dwell in our land.”

Let’s take a moment to silently pray and reflect on the blessing of God’s security, as our ultimate help and shield.

(Silent Prayer) ... Lord, in your love and mercy, hear our prayers. Now let us say the Lord’s prayer together:

Lord’s Prayer: 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 us 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, the power, and the glory forever, Amen.

Hymns:

This is My Father’s World, p. 9

It is Well with My Soul, p. 10

Standing on the Promises, p. 11

Third Reading: Quotes on Security

“They who can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety.” — Benjamin Franklin

“The good we secure for ourselves is precarious and uncertain until it is secured for all of us and incorporated into our common life.” — Jane Addams

“If you want total security, go to prison. There you're fed, clothed, given medical care and so on. The only thing lacking... is freedom.” — Dwight D. Eisenhower

“Where does your security lie? Is God your refuge, your hiding place, your stronghold, your shepherd, your counselor, your friend, your redeemer, your saviour, your guide? If He is, you don't need to search any further for security.” — Elisabeth Elliot

“Nothing in this world compares to the comfort and security of having someone just hold your hand.” — author Richelle E. Goodrich

Hymns:

Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing, p. 12

Shall We Gather at the River, p. 13

Fourth Reading: Final paragraphs of the Declaration of Independence. Again, it is interesting to note how they turned to God in this hour of great need:

“We, therefore, the Representatives of the United States of America, in General Congress, Assembled, *appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions*, do, in the Name, and by the authority of the good People of these Colonies, solemnly publish and declare: That these United Colonies are, and of Right ought to be Free and Independent States; that they are Absolved from all Allegiance to the British Crown, and that all political connection between them and the State of Great Britain is and ought to be totally dissolved....

And for the support of this Declaration, *with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence*, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.”

Hymns:

Blest Be the Tie that Binds, p. 14

I Need Thee Every Hour, p. 15

Closing Blessing: (Strike bell as you say the word “Lord”)

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and grant you peace. Amen.

Closing Hymn: Doxology, p. 23

Psalm 33:12-22

Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord,
the people whom he has chosen as his heritage!

¹³ The Lord looks down from heaven;

he sees all the children of man;

¹⁴ from where he sits enthroned he looks out

on all the inhabitants of the earth,

¹⁵ he who fashions the hearts of them all

and observes all their deeds.

¹⁶ The king is not saved by his great army;

a warrior is not delivered by his great strength.

¹⁷ The war horse is a false hope for salvation,

and by its great might it cannot rescue.

¹⁸ Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him,

on those who hope in his steadfast love,

¹⁹ that he may deliver their soul from death

and keep them alive in famine.

²⁰ Our soul waits for the Lord;

he is our help and our shield.

²¹ For our heart is glad in him,

because we trust in his holy name.

²² Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us,

even as we hope in you.

1 Peter 2

⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. ¹² Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

¹³ Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, ^[b] whether it be to the emperor ^[c] as supreme, ¹⁴ or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. ¹⁵ For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. ¹⁶ Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants ^[d] of God. ¹⁷ Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.