

Fourth of July Narration for July 5, 2015

Narrator 1: Yesterday, on July 4, we celebrated the anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence which sets forth some basic principles and values of our Republic. Perhaps it seems strange to celebrate the birth of our country in a church service, and in many countries it would be incongruous. But not in our country, and especially not in New England, or in Connecticut. Despite modern attempts to separate faith and government, the early history of Connecticut and of our country reveals a close relationship between the Christian faith of the early colonists and the development of American government. Today, it is left to the church to preserve this essential history.

Narrator 2: Our era began when the Puritans landed at Plymouth Rock. Listen to their mindset, as set forth in the Mayflower compact of 1620, the first official document of New England government.

Narrator 3:

Having undertaken, for the Glory of God, and advancements of the Christian faith and honor of our King and Country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the Northern parts of Virginia, do by these presents, solemnly and mutually, in the presence of God, and one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic; for our better ordering, and preservation and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by virtue hereof to enact, constitute, and frame, such just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions, and offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the colony; unto which we promise all due submission and obedience. (from the Mayflower Compact, 1620)

Narrator 1: One can certainly conclude whatever other business the settlers intended to undertake, they sought to live as servants of God and exponents of the Christian faith. It wasn't long before settlers migrated to Connecticut and founded the towns of Hartford, Wethersfield, and Windsor. These colonists also adopted a founding document in 1639 called "The Fundamental Orders of Connecticut."

Narrator 2: Here is a quote from that document:

For as much as it hath pleased Almighty God by the wise disposition of his divine providence..., that we the Inhabitants and Residents of Windsor, Hartford and Wethersfield... well knowing where a people are gathered together the word of God requires that to maintain the peace... there should be an orderly and decent Government established according to God...; do therefore associate and conjoin ourselves to be as one Public State or Commonwealth... and do enter into Combination and Confederation together, to maintain and preserve the liberty and purity of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus which we now profess, as also, the discipline of the Churches, which according to the truth of the said Gospel is now practiced amongst us.

Narrator 3: As you can see, the earliest people of Connecticut were diligent and sincere Christians, confessing their faith in their public documents, and intending that their government should be well integrated with the faith they professed.

Now jump forward to July 4, 1776. The same pious devotion to God is very much alive in the Declaration of Independence adopted 239 years ago.

Narrator 2: In the first of four references to God in the Declaration, we read:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

Narrator 1: How is it then that people today seem to have forgotten this close relationship between Christian faith and the founding documents of our country? Perhaps they think that this connection was only a formal one. But if they would dig into the quotes of early American leaders, they would quickly see that the spirit of Christian faith breathes through their lives and was very naturally expressed in the things they wrote and the government that they formed.

Narrator 3:

President George Washington: *"Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports ... Let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion."*

President Thomas Jefferson: *"No nation has ever existed or been governed without religion. Nor can be. The Christian religion is the best religion that has been given to man and I, as Chief Magistrate of this nation, am bound to give it the sanction of my example."*

Narrator 2:

Patrick Henry: *"It cannot be emphasized too strongly that this great nation was founded, not by religionists, but by Christians, not on religions, but on the gospel of Jesus Christ."*

President James Madison: *"We have staked the future of all our political institutions upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves according to the 10 Commandments of God."*

Narrator 3:

Supreme Court Ruling in 1892: *"Our laws and institutions must necessarily be based on and must embody the teachings of the Redeemer of mankind. It is impossible for it to be otherwise. In this sense, our civilizations and our institutions are emphatically Christian."*

Narrator 2:

Researchers Donald Lutz and Charles Hyneman examined some 15,000 documents written during America's founding era (1760-1805), and analyzed their political content. Of the 3,154 references to other sources, the source quoted most often was the Bible, at 34%.

(Donald S. Lutz and Charles S. Hyneman, "The Relative Influence of European Writers on Late Eighteenth-Century American Political Thought," *American Political Review* 189 (1984): 189-197.)

Narrator 1: So the next time somebody reinterprets our nation's history, leaving out its Christian beginnings, you know differently. Our nation's founding documents, its values, and its principles were based on the strong Christian beliefs of its first settlers. That is a historical fact and is not in doubt. What is in doubt, is what our country will do with the priceless heritage that it has been given. But one thing is sure: if no one reminds people of the heritage, there is no way that it will be valued as it should be. So let us be people who remember the great Christian heritage that we have been given in our country.