



"WALKING A LIFE OF PASSION AND PURPOSE FOR JESUS CHRIST"

Pastor Kirk Werner
2131 East Governor John Sevier Highway
Knoxville, TN 37920
(865) 573-8684



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Friends and Family of CrossWalk,

As we approach Independence Day I'm reminded of an experience shared by Kay Warren. She writes: "Heading home to California...a friend and I passed through the Dallas-Fort Worth airport. On the way to the connecting gate, we heard loud patriotic music playing and saw a group, mostly women, wearing colorful hats, cheering, and waving American flags. The troops were coming home, and here was the welcoming committee.

Two women encouraged us to grab flags and join in. We were early for our flight, so we took places in the makeshift greeting line. At first, a few soldiers just dribbled by. We whooped and waved our flags furiously. Then the pace picked back up as dozens of men and women in uniform came barreling through. We kept repeating: 'Welcome home! We're glad you're back! We appreciate you!' Some soldiers wiped away tears, while others displayed huge, self-conscious smiles.

After 45 minutes, it was time to catch our flight. We hugged the organizers and thanked the vets who had come to honor this generation of soldiers. As we sank into our seats for the flight, we felt humbled by participating in this sweet moment of coming home. It was impossible not to draw the obvious spiritual parallels. These men and women had taken oaths of faithfulness and service. They had fought courageously, lived with deprivation,

danger, and disease, and took unbelievable risks, all for the good of our nation.

But as great as America is, it is a temporary place. No nation lives forever. As believers in Christ, we are all soldiers in the Lord's army. We, too, take oaths of fidelity, sacrifice, and service. Our oaths of allegiance are to a kingdom that shall never end — a country where there is never a mistake in leadership, where justice flows down like a river, where poverty, disease, terror, hunger, and greed hold no power.

Scripture teaches us about the welcome and rewards we will receive when our battle on earth is over."

We enjoy true freedom as His people. We all have been created by Him and called to freely serve Him and those He brings across our paths. We read in Galatians 5:13 **"You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love."**

Enjoy His gift of true freedom and use in ways that delights our heavenly Father.

*Your brother in Christ,
Kirk*

Messages for the Month

JULY 1, 2018 – **Lamentations 3:22 - 33** -
“**Mercy Me**” 6th Sunday after Pentecost -
Communion

JULY 8, 2018 – **Psalm 47:5 - 9** - “**Sing, Sing, Sing**” – 7th Sunday after Pentecost

JULY 15, 2018 – **Ephesians 1:3 - 14** - “**His Life, His Riches, His Plan**” – 8th Sunday after Pentecost

JULY 22, 2018 – **James 3:13 - 18** – “**Becoming Wise**” – 9th Sunday after Pentecost

JULY 29, 2018 – **Ephesians 3:14 - 21** – “**The Power of Prayer**” – 10th Sunday after Pentecost

Our Staff

Pastor: Kirk Werner

Child Care Director: Linda Odle

Music Director: Trey Lister

Director of Children's Ministries:
Anna Baker

Class of 2018:

Donna Carter, Matt Peterson &
Greg Waldrop

Class of 2019:

John Carson &
Courtney Scollard

Class of 2020:

Carol Jordan, Jim Slyman &
Maurice Briere



JULY BIRTHDAYS !

John Carson – 6th

Barbara Johnson – 6th

Will Schenk – 7th

Bill Hawk - 8th

Randy Wagner – 10th

Donnie Ferguson – 10th

Aaron May – 11th

Christie Werner – 14th

Greg Waldrop – 16th

Keith Ferguson – 18th

Lisa Brummett – 18th

Karin Morton – 18th

Caitlin Davis – 19th

Albert Wayman – 19th

Brad Brummet – 21th

Mary Alice Wagner – 22th

Mandy May – 24th

Sue Werner – 29th

Ava Werner – 30th



NURSERY SCHEDULE



Preschool Room with **Linda Odle**
Dawn Briere, Laine Donnell or Carol Jordan
& **Extra Helper!**

July 1: Jeremy Cecil & Gwen Davis

July 8: Anna Baker & Lindsay Rosa

July 15: Wanda Wayman & Debbie Lutton

July 22: Mike Walkup & Karin Morton

July 29: Irving Rosa & Sue Werner



Kids Crossing with **Jim Odle**
John Carson or Courtney Scollard

July 1: Jeanne Cecil

July 8: Chelsea Peterson

July 15: Susan Fletcher

July 22: Brenda Clabo

July 29: Sue Werner

If you **cannot** work *your scheduled time*, please swap with someone and if you *cannot find a substitute*, call Linda Odle at 690-9358 or 207-2623. When you know, you can't work in the nursery, please e-mail the date(s) to jlodle@comcast.net or put them in writing and give them to Linda Odle in the nursery. Thanks!



Babies/Toddlers/Preschool **& Kids Crossing Children**

Come love on the youngest members of our church family. You will have no preparation or teaching. You can choose to help with the babies/toddlers/preschool or Kids Crossing children. A **FREE CD** of the complete service before you leave church is waiting for you.

To help please contact Ms. Linda in the nursery or call 690-9358 for more information.

Your Prayers are needed for The Good News Club at New Hopewell Elementary



Please Pray For The After School Good News Children

Thank You



SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS:



CrossWalk Café

July first is our cafe' featuring "All-American BBQ"! It's a mid-summer tradition as we celebrate Independence Day by gathering around the table to enjoy the delicious preparations and fellowship of the church family. We hope you can join us in the cool and comfortable surroundings which the good Lord has provided.



THANK YOU...KUDOS...APPLAUSE!!!

The session would like to say THANK YOU to all families for your service on the **Refreshment Ministry Team**. When you join the church, you are assigned to this team, as we feel it is a ministry that all can participate in. You are paired with another family and given one month (every 1 1/2 – 2 years) to provide Sunday morning refreshments. Most teams take two weeks each; others share in the entire month. *It is up to you.* Please remember that you are **NOT** responsible for providing breakfast for everyone. This is just a light refreshment to have with coffee or juice. (Coffee is provided by the church.) *What the teams provide is their gift to the church in service to our Lord.* Be sure and show your gratitude... We are certainly grateful to each of you!!!

**The teams are posted on the bulletin board for the year and printed 3 months ahead in the newsletter, so that you can plan ahead.*



Sunday Morning Refreshment Schedule

July 2018

Carolyn & John Carson 573-9430
Jeanne & Jeremy Cecil 643-6967

August 2018

Karin & John Morton 231-878-9883
Becky & Ben Baker 425-466-3995

September 2018

Lisa & Pat McNabb 951-1866
Janice & Jim Slyman 250-1821



CrossWalk family, if you see a need to replenish coffee supplies such as coffee, hot/cold

cups, paper towels, kitchen dish soap or the men's/women's room supplies, **please let us know** by; (1) **noting what is needed on the bulletin board in the kitchen for refreshment supplies** and (2) **noting on the rest room listing in the rest rooms** for rest room supplies so that supplies can be replenished **before they are completely out**. If you have questions, please contact *Judy Campbell* or *Sue Werner*. Thank you!



Check out our website!

Have you checked out our website lately? It's a great way to introduce people to our church. Navigate through the site and see pictures of various activities. There are photos of **JAM** (Jesus and Me children's ministry), church events, a calendar of events, and the weekly messages are catalogued in the media section. This is a helpful tool in keeping informed and a good resource to refer to your friends. The web address is www.crosswalkepc.org.



Church Cleaning Committee

July 4 – July 7 **Matt & Chelsea Peterson**
July 11 – July 14 **John & Carolyn Carson**
July 18 – July 21 **John & Carolyn Carson**
July 25 – July 28 **Mike & Karen Walkup**



If you use the church during the week, please, be sure to take your trash with you when you leave – especially food waste.



Family Promise of Knoxville

Our church is joining the *Interfaith Hospitality Network* as a support church for First Baptist Church when they host families from Family Promise of Knoxville. There will be a 1-hour training for anyone interested in participating in this ministry on **Sunday, July 8**, right after church. Our next opportunity to serve will be the week of July 22-28. *Courtney* - graciousdoll@gmail.com



I am sorry I'm so late with this note. I'm still trying to adjust to the "new normal life."

Myself and Dale's Family thank you for all the love, support, kindness, cards, phone calls, prayers, and food that was brought the day he passed and the next morning, visits, the food prepared for the receiving of friend's day and memorial donations.

Dale loved you all. I am so blessed, thankful and love my church family!

Debbie



Josh Tolbert's new military address

Seaman Tolbert, Joshua C.
440 Roberts Ave. P.O. Box 749
Bldg 1094
Pensacola, FL 32511

Mail addressed to him needs to be in this format (strict military addressing). Josh will be there for five (5) months.



*Thank
you*



Thanks to Mike Walkup, there is mulch available at the church for spreading in the flower beds. *Thanks Mike and thanks to those of you who have volunteered for the upkeep of the flower beds.* Your brother in Christ, Kirk



A Study of Ephesians 1:1-14

by JASON JACKSON

The book of Ephesians is about the church — the eternal purpose of God in Christ. The epistle takes us from eternity to eternity, in contemplation of the divine plan. Obviously, God wants us to understand something about his eternal purpose. Ephesians demands our careful attention. Its theme could not be more important.

What should we expect from studying this book? Will we understand God's plan better? Yes. And what else? If we put our hearts into the inspired

letter, we will love God more, and live closer to him.

The book of Ephesians begins like many letters of the first century — an identification of the author, the recipients, and a greeting. But this is no ordinary letter. It is from “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus” (1:1). The letter has the authority that Christ gave to his apostles; it is a revelation of the mind of God (Luke 10:16; John 14:26; 16:13; Acts 22:14-15).

Paul adds, “. . . **by the will of God**” (cf. 1:5,9,11). He was appointed by God “**to see the Righteous One, and to hear a voice from his mouth**” (Acts 22:14). His preaching was authoritative — and still is. We are reading what God wants us to know (3:3-4).

Paul wrote to “the saints and the faithful.” The word “saints” refers to Christians — not to an alleged spiritually elite. All Christians are saints (i.e., holy ones) because they are cleansed by blood, dedicated to God, and “set apart” for divine service.

They were “the faithful” because they exercised faith in Jesus Christ. They believed the gospel, obeyed it, and continuously lived in it (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:1-3). “The saints and the faithful” are “in Christ” (cf. 5:23). Being “in Christ” means that a person has been united with him, is hidden in him, and lives for him (Romans 6:5; Colossians 3:3; Philippians 1:21). Together, the faithful are his body, the church (1:22-23).

Spiritual Thoughts for Spiritual People

Paul greets them with spiritual thoughts of “grace and peace.” These terms were common greetings in Greek and Hebrew circles. But the words take on fuller meaning in the Christian context.

“Grace” means favor. When used of God it refers to the favor bestowed in our interest, which is undeserved. God is praiseworthy because of his grace (bestowed freely, but not unconditionally). This favor is priceless and saving. If God were not gracious, we would have no hope.

Grace is coupled with peace. Grace is what God bestows; peace is the result of those who receive grace (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:1). We cannot be at peace with God without receiving his grace. We have peace with God and remain in his grace when we

are justified through obedience to the gospel (Romans 5:1; 1:5,16).

Accordingly, Paul salutes all readers of Ephesians, wanting us to know the fullness of the Lord's favor, the sufficiency of his grace, the reconciliation its effects, and the tranquility of being right with God.

The Source of Christian Life

"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (1:2). The source of spiritual life is God, our heavenly Father.

The term "Father," applied to God, is used in two ways in Scripture. He is Father of all — as Creator (Acts 17:28-29). Also, he is Father of the saved — as Redeemer (cf. John 1:12). The second sense is used here. Christians are "born again" by the will of the Father and are in his spiritual household (John 3:5; Ephesians 1:5; 2:19).

Jesus Christ is also the source of spiritual life. He is the means by which God gives eternal life to those who obey him (Ephesians 1:7; Romans 3:23-26; 1 John 2:1-2). Christ is here identified as the "Lord." Paul reminds his readers of the deity of Jesus (cf. Colossians 2:9). He reigns in a domain where only deity belongs. Having taken on flesh for the redemptive work, he accomplished the eternal purpose of God — to bring grace and peace to undeserving and miserable humanity.

Paul in Praise

Many of Paul's letters begin with thanksgiving and prayer. A good example is Colossians. **"We give thanks to God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you"** (1:3). This motif is also found in Ephesians, but it does not occur until 1:15. In 1:3-14, the apostle praises God. God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ. Paul "eulogizes" the work of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit (1:3,5,14).

When the apostle John peered into heaven, he witnessed an anthem of praise: **"Unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, be the blessing, and the honor, and the glory, and the dominion, forever and ever"** (Revelation 5:13). Will you echo Paul's praise of Ephesians 1:3-14?

Blessed Be the Father

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. . ." (Ephesians 1:3). The word "blessed" is eulogeo — like our word "eulogy." It means, "to speak well of." There are related words for "blessing" men, but this word is used only of God in the New Testament.

Men may be "praised" for their benevolent deeds occasionally, but God is "blessed" because of his intrinsic nature. God, because of his nature, blesses us. He is, therefore, worthy of praise (Psalm 18:3). Paul shows that God is the source of all spiritual blessings by the phrase "according to" (Grk. kata; vv. 5,7,9,11). It means "in accordance with, in conformity with, corresponding to" (Arndt, et al., p. 407).

God's redemptive blessings are "in conformity with" his good pleasure, his grace, his purpose, and his will. He chose to bless us in Christ because that is his nature. We ought, therefore, to praise him.

In Christ

God blesses us "in Christ." He chose us "in him." He adopted us "through Jesus Christ." God's grace is given "in the Beloved." Redemption is "in him." Forgiveness of sins is "in him." God's purpose is "in him." Salvation is "in him."

God alone is the source of spiritual blessings, and Christ is the only way to access them. God's plan of salvation is inseparable from his Son. Jesus said, **"Except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins"** (John 8:24). Likewise, he said, **"I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me"** (John 14:6).

Ephesians 1:7 defines salvation as redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Salvation is not just "... closing the gap between our real and our ideal existence and thus achieving self-fulfillment" (Cottrell, p. 49). Salvation is not finding freedom from the world and its suffering through "self-migration." Salvation is not human achievement. Hinduism and Buddhism fail to identify the source of man's problems; they certainly fail, therefore, to provide the solution.

God revealed to us our origin, nature, sinful state,

needs, purpose, and the way of salvation. Salvation is redemption by God. It is accomplished by the in-our-place death of Jesus Christ. And we must submit to him (Hebrews 5:9; cf. Acts 4:12). Sin is the problem, and salvation in Christ is the solution.

In the Heavenly Places

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (1:3). The phrase translated “in the heavenly places” is *en tois epouraniois* (lit., “in the heavenlies”). This construction is only found in Ephesians. Paul uses this group of words four more times.

It is **“in the heavenly realm”** where Christ reigns (1:20). Christians sit with him “in the heavenlies” (2:6). God’s wisdom is made known through the church to “the principalities and powers in heavenly places” (3:10). Christians war against evil forces **“in the heavenly realm”** (6:12). The clause appears to be synonymous with “spiritual.”

As children of God, we are sojourners on earth, but we are citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:20). We acknowledge the existence of spiritual realities, spiritual influences, and spiritual goals. Life is more than the physical. The spiritual realm is the place in which God gives all spiritual blessings. It is the domain of Christ’s kingdom and God’s eternal purpose. It is the essence of life.

Predestined to What?

As Paul identifies some specific spiritual blessings, he says God “chose us. . . before the foundation of the world. . . having foreordained us. . .” (1:4-5). Clearly God “predestined” or “foreordained” the saved. But what is the nature of this predestination? And is it conditional or unconditional?

The word translated “foreordained” (ASV) or “predestined” (KJV, et al.) is from the Greek term *proginosko*. It literally means “to know before,” being a compound term (*pro*, before, *ginosko*, to know – Vine, p. 459). What the Father “decided before” is a very important thing (1:4-5). Did he determine who would be believers and who would be unbelievers?

Consider the following biblical truths. We read of man’s obligation to obey God throughout the Bible. We also see the continuous pleading of God for

men to believe and obey him (cf. Matthew 11:28-30). It is incredulous to think that God would plead with men who allegedly could not believe. Since people can and must respond to the preaching of the gospel, the Lord commanded us to preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15-16). The ones who submit to it will be saved.

God did not decide who would believe and who would disobey. He did, however, determine that those who would believe would be saved. It is clear that the Lord’s predestination of a thing does not negate a person’s freewill. God chose Christ (1 Peter 1:20; 2:4). But Christ exercised his own freewill in the redemptive plan (John 10:17-18; Galatians 1:4). If we want to share in the glory God chose for the saved, we must submit to his conditions.

Every Spiritual Blessing

God **“chose us in him. . . that we should be holy and without blemish before him”** (1:4). The word “that” expresses the goal of Heaven’s scheme. This means we can be “void of offense” and “unreprovable” at the Lord’s Second Coming (Philippians 1:10; 1 Corinthians 1:8). We know, however, of our many imperfections and weaknesses. Only “in him” is this result possible.

The word “sons” (1:5) shows the relationship that Christians have with God. He is our Father. A child of God receives his love (1 John 3:1). A child of God will share in the glory of the Son (Romans 8:29).

God freely bestowed his grace in Christ, the Beloved (1:6). “Grace” underscores the reason he is disposed to save us, and it emphasizes our undeserving status. **“But God, being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us. . . made us alive. . . by grace have ye been saved”** (2:4-5). “God so loved” that he chose to provide a way of salvation by giving his only Son. He has done what we never could do on our own (John 3:16; Romans 8:1-3).

Grace is not, however, unconditional. We can be forgiven of our sins (1:7), if we obey the gospel of God (cf. 1 Peter 4:17).

Apostolic preaching required a human response. **“And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be**

baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins" (Acts 2:38). When we, by faith, access God's grace, we are forgiven and redeemed (1:7). "Forgiveness" means "to send away." God sends away our trespasses by the blood of Christ. "Redemption" means deliverance or release. It contains the idea of the payment of a ransom. The blood of Christ is the purchase-price for our salvation (Acts 20:28). Together, these terms vividly express to us the idea of being released from the penalty of sin. How precious it is to be forgiven. What a blessing!

God has not left us in the dark. He has, according to his eternal purpose in Christ, revealed his will (3:9-11). It is a wonderful blessing to know the nature and destiny of his plan — the mystery of his will (1:7-9).

The Mystery of God's Will

In a consideration of spiritual blessings, Paul refers to the revelation of the mystery of God's will. "Will" indicates the intentions, or desires, that eternally characterized his plan. But his will was not fully disclosed in the beginning; it unfolded progressively.

We have this blessing. God blesses us by "**making known unto us the mystery of his will**" (1:9). The knowledge of his saving plan — as revealed in the Christian dispensation — should not go unappreciated. Think of what we know that was unknown in Old Testament times. Consider that life and immortality are brought to light through the gospel (2 Timothy 1:10).

The term "mystery" is used in a special sense in Scripture. It means that which was hidden. It indicates that the eternal purpose was undiscoverable by man. However, God has revealed the unknowable to us.

What people could not know about God's plan was made plain through the gospel. The gospel — the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ — is the living message concerning God's eternal purpose.

The patriarchs were promised. The prophets foretold. But you and I see the immeasurable nature of God's love in action. "**God so loved the world that he gave. . .**" (John 3:16; cf. Romans 5:8).

"Who can be saved?" is another part of God's revealed will. Paul writes that "we" were made a heritage, and "you also" were saved (1:11,13). The "we" refers to the Jews; the "you also" designates the Gentiles. Thus, the apostle identifies the universal scope of the mystery (cf. Romans 1:16). This does not mean, however, that all will be saved (cf. Matthew 7:13-14). The gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes (Romans 1:16; cf. Acts 10:34).

Another aspect of this blessing — what God has revealed to us — is the disclosure concerning the future. This involves both the duration of our heavenly habitation and the dignity that will be assigned to the saved. The Lord reveals to us that heaven is forever. The righteous, Jesus says, shall go away into "**eternal life**" (Matthew 25:46).

The plan — that the Lord has now disclosed in the gospel — also includes the dignity that will be assigned to his redeemed children. "**For our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory. . .**" (Philippians 3:20-21). Christians will be "**conformed to the image of his Son. . .**" (Romans 8:29). This is the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27), the redemption of our body (Romans 8:23), and the salvation of our soul (Romans 8:11).

What God has made known to us is so wonderful. It is powerfully motivating for us to walk in love, as Christ also loved us (Ephesians 5:2).

The Redemptive Finale

What a blessing! Having looked into "eternity past," and considered some things about the redemptive present, Paul gives a glimpse of the "redemptive future."

God's plan is "**. . . unto a dispensation of the fulness of times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth. . .**" (1:10).

Paul speaks of a scheme that will certainly come to fulfillment. God's plan is going to reach its goal, and the completion of this divine economy will sum up "all things in Christ." What does Paul mean by the phrase "sum up"? When the divine economy is

complete, there will be a unity, focused on Christ, of all things — things in heaven and on earth. All of the faithful — angelic and human — will be united “under one roof” for endless praise.

Praise God! He is our Father. He adopted us, chose us, freely bestowed his grace on us, redeemed us, and forgave our sins; he revealed his will to us, saved us, confirmed his promises to us, and possesses us — in Christ, who gave himself for our sins.

When we contemplate who God is, what he has done, and what we will be, we will know exactly for what we should praise.

Praise him from whom all blessings flow and walk every day according to the calling of the gospel of the Son of God.



Short History of the 4th of July



by History.com

The Fourth of July—also known as Independence Day or July 4th—has been a federal holiday in the United States since 1941, but the tradition of Independence Day celebrations goes back to the 18th century and the American Revolution. On July 2nd, 1776, the Continental Congress voted in favor of independence, and two days later delegates from the 13 colonies adopted the Declaration of Independence, a historic document drafted by Thomas Jefferson. From 1776 to the present day, July 4th has been celebrated as the birth of American independence, with festivities ranging from fireworks, parades and concerts to more casual family gatherings and barbecues.

THE BIRTH OF INDEPENDENCE DAY

When the initial battles in the Revolutionary War broke out in April 1775, few colonists desired complete independence from Great Britain, and those who did were considered radical.

By the middle of the following year, however, many more colonists had come to favor independence, thanks to growing hostility against Britain and the spread of revolutionary sentiments such as those expressed in the bestselling pamphlet “Common Sense,” published by Thomas Paine in early 1776.

On June 7, when the Continental Congress met at the Pennsylvania State House (later Independence Hall) in Philadelphia, the Virginia delegate Richard Henry Lee introduced a motion calling for the colonies’ independence.

Amid heated debate, Congress postponed the vote on Lee’s resolution, but appointed a five-man committee—including Thomas Jefferson of Virginia, John Adams of Massachusetts, Roger Sherman of Connecticut, Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania and Robert R. Livingston of New York—to draft a formal statement justifying the break with Great Britain.

John Adams believed that July 2nd was the correct date on which to celebrate the birth of American independence and would reportedly turn down invitations to appear at July 4th events in protest. Adams and Thomas Jefferson both died on July 4, 1826—the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence.

On July 2nd, the Continental Congress voted in favor of Lee’s resolution for independence in a near-unanimous vote (the New York delegation abstained, but later voted affirmatively). On that day, John Adams wrote to his wife Abigail that July 2 “will be celebrated, by succeeding Generations, as the great anniversary Festival” and that the celebration should include “Pomp and Parade...Games, Sports, Guns, Bells, Bonfires and Illuminations from one End of this Continent to the other.”

On July 4th, the Continental Congress formally adopted the Declaration of Independence, which had been written largely by Jefferson. Though the

vote for actual independence took place on July 2nd, from then on, the 4th became the day that was celebrated as the birth of American independence.

EARLY FOURTH OF JULY CELEBRATIONS

In the pre-Revolutionary years, colonists had held annual celebrations of the king's birthday, which traditionally included the ringing of bells, bonfires, processions and speechmaking. By contrast, during the summer of 1776 some colonists celebrated the birth of independence by holding mock funerals for King George III, as a way of symbolizing the end of the monarchy's hold on America and the triumph of liberty.

Festivities including concerts, bonfires, parades and the firing of cannons and muskets usually accompanied the first public readings of the Declaration of Independence, beginning immediately after its adoption. Philadelphia held the first annual commemoration of independence on July 4, 1777, while Congress was still occupied with the ongoing war.

George Washington issued double rations of rum to all his soldiers to mark the anniversary of independence in 1778, and in 1781, several months before the key American victory at Yorktown, Massachusetts became the first state to make July 4th an official state holiday.

After the Revolutionary War, Americans continued to commemorate Independence Day every year, in celebrations that allowed the new nation's

emerging political leaders to address citizens and create a feeling of unity. By the last decade of the 18th century, the two major political parties—Federalists and Democratic-Republicans—that had arisen began holding separate Fourth of July celebrations in many large cities.

FOURTH OF JULY BECOMES A NATIONAL HOLIDAY

The tradition of patriotic celebration became even more widespread after the War of 1812, in which the United States again faced Great Britain. In 1870, the U.S. Congress made July 4th a federal holiday; in 1941, the provision was expanded to grant a paid holiday to all federal employees. Over the years, the political importance of the holiday would decline, but Independence Day remained an important national holiday and a symbol of patriotism.

Falling in mid-summer, the Fourth of July has since the late 19th century become a major focus of leisure activities and a common occasion for family get-togethers, often involving fireworks and outdoor barbecues. The most common symbol of the holiday is the American flag, and a common musical accompaniment is "The Star-Spangled Banner," the national anthem of the United States. July 4 has been designated a national holiday to commemorate the day the United States laid down its claim to be a free and independent nation.

