JULY 4, 2016
INDEPENDENCE DAY

taking faith home

The truth will set you free.

BIBLE READINGS FOR INDEPENDENCE DAY

Jesus told the people who had faith in him, "If you keep on obeying what I have said, you truly are my disciples. You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." **John 8:31-32 (CEV)**

My friends, you were chosen to be free. So don't use your freedom as an excuse to do anything you want. Use it as an opportunity to serve each other with love. All that the Law says can be summed up in the command to love others as much as you love yourself. **Galatians 5:13-14 (CEV)**

SAY, PRAY, AND BLESS:

A Prayer for the Day:
Lord God, we thank you for all those who have sacrificed much so that we may have freedom of speech and religion in our land. Above all, we thank you for the freedom not bound by constitutions and laws but by the cross of Christ, freedom to love you and all people with faith in Jesus Christ. In his name we pray. Amen.

Mealtime Prayer:
Dear God, for abundant seas, for fruited plains, for amber waves of grain, for all the ways you have blessed this country with ample food, we give you thanks for this meal. With all the abundance you have given us, use our hands and hearts to free all people from hunger and want. In the name of Jesus Christ, the one who has set us free to join you at your banquet feast of love. Amen.

A Blessing to Give:
May God give you a joyful heart, a peaceful mind and a serving spirit. In the name of the Triune God whose abundant love sets you free. Amen.

MILESTONES MINISTRY

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CARING CONVERSATIONS

Discuss in your home or small group:

- If you could be free of one thing in your life, what would you choose?
- How does Jesus set people free? What are we freed from?
- How does God want us to use the freedom Jesus gives us?

DEVOTIONS

Pray for people whose freedom is limited because of personal or social circumstances. Here are some suggestions:

- Pray for people who live in countries where personal freedoms are restricted.
- Pray for people who have been wrongly imprisoned.
- Pray for people who lack freedom because of poverty.
- Pray for people trapped in addictions.
- Pray for people who are unable to freely practice their Christian faith.
- Pray for those who serve communities and nations to keep others free.

SERVICE

Galatians 5:14 tells us to use our freedom "as an opportunity to serve each other with love." In response to these words, plan an Independence Day act of loving service, for example; visit someone in a hospital or nursing home; invite someone to join you for the holiday; clean up litter in your neighborhood; wash a neighbor's car or mow their lawn.

RITUALS AND TRADITIONS

Although July 4th has only been a federal holiday in the United States since 1941, the tradition of Independence Day celebrations goes back to the 18th century and the American Revolution (1775-83). In June 1776, representatives of the 13 colonies then fighting in the revolutionary struggle weighed a resolution that would declare their independence from Great Britain. On July 2nd, the Continental Congress voted in favor of independence, and two days later its delegates adopted the Declaration of Independence, a historic document drafted by Thomas Jefferson. From 1776 until the present day, July 4th has been celebrated as the birth of American independence.

Sing or recite a national hymn like *O Beautiful for Spacious Skies* or *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*. Take time to quietly reflect on the message of the hymn and the power and glory of God.

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In addition to *Taking Faith Home*, celebrate milestones in your daily life as an effective faith formation tool. Go to: **www.milestonesministry.org**