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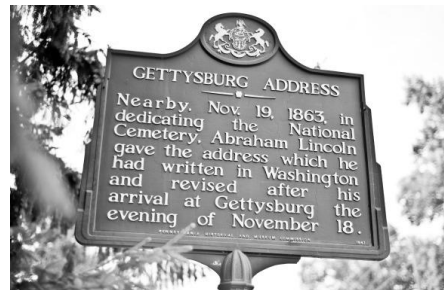


The Voice for Chaplaincy - Chartered by Congress - Serving Since 1925

Weekly Newsgram - July 5th 2017

Our Nation's Independence

Yesterday the United States, as a nation, paused to observe, remember, and celebrate the courageous act of the signing of the Declaration of Independence some 241 years ago. The trials faced by the men and women who were formed together as a nation were perhaps never more challenging than during the Civil War. Gettysburg, the deciding battle of that terrible war, took place on the eve of the 87th anniversary of our declaration of independence.



Several months after the great battle, in November, the commission formed to establish the [National Cemetery at Gettysburg](#) hosted the dedication ceremony. We remember the event primarily because it was here that Abraham Lincoln delivered the Gettysburg Address. As one historian, [Garry Wills](#), says in referring to Lincoln, "He came to change the world, to effect an intellectual revolution. No other words could have done it. The miracle is that those words did. In his brief time before the crowd at Gettysburg he wove a spell that has not yet been broken - he called up a new nation out of the blood and trauma." The impact was near immediate says Wills. "Up to the Civil War 'the United States' was invariably a plural noun; 'The United States are a free country.' After Gettysburg it became a singular: 'The United States is a free country.'"

Sharing the platform with Lincoln at the pivotal event was the Reverend Thomas H. Stockton, Chaplain of the House of Representatives. Chaplain Stockton's invocation lasted nearly eight minutes. As one reporter noted, "[Never was a man so fit for a task.](#)" It was also reported that by the end of the invocation many were crying and both Lincoln and the Honorable Edward Everett (the principal speaker) wiped tears from their faces. Chaplain Stockton's words were reported in major papers almost as often as the president's.

Just prior to closing his invocation with the Lord's prayer, Stockton gave us these words, "[but our best hope is in Thy blessing. O, Lord, our God! O, Father, bless us! Bless the bereaved, whether present, or absent; bless our sick and wounded soldiers and sailors; bless all our rulers and people; bless our army and navy; bless the efforts of the suppression of the rebellion; and bless all the associations of this day; and place, and scene, forever. As the trees are not dead, though their foliage is gone, so our heroes are not dead, though their forms have fallen. In their proper personality, they are all with Thee. And the spirit of their example is here. It fills the air, it fills our hearts. And, long as time shall last, it will hover in the skies, and rest on this landscape; and the pilgrims of our own land, and from all lands, will thrill with its inspiration and increase and confirm their devotion to liberty, religion and God.](#)"

Even as Lincoln's words at Gettysburg changed how we understand our nation, we give thanks for the Chaplain Stockton who helped shape the day and, as such, contributed to our continued celebration of liberty and justice for all. As chaplains, we may not always be the history makers but we do make significant contributions. Let us continue to give thanks.

Lyman Smith
Executive Director

Retirement Thank You For Your Service

Chaplain (Colonel) J. Maddox Woodbery, Jr., USA, Retired

Congratulations to Chaplain Matt Woodbery and his wife Carol as they enter into military retirement. Matt serves as a member of our National Executive Committee. He will now continue his service as a chaplain serving with his denomination, the United Methodist Church, in Georgia.



Perhaps fittingly, Matt wrote a piece for [Reconciling Ministries](#) entitled, **Thank You for Your Service**, on Veterans Day, 2015.

As we thank Matt for his service here are suggestions in his own words.

It's never wrong to say "thank you for your service." But I would add be intentional about reaching out to a veteran and in addition to thanking them for their service, ask questions about their service. What did they like about being in uniform? What was the most challenging thing about being in uniform? What do you miss about it? Notice that these questions will often bring out the pride that most of us who are serving or have served feel when we reflect on our service. Indeed, there are very difficult things that sometimes won't be safe to discuss for any number of reasons. But entering into conversation about a person's military service brings more honor to your gratitude than a simple "thank you."

Rural Health Project Online Survey on Veterans and Active Duty Health

Researchers from the Rural Health Research Institute of Georgia Southern University are collecting data from individuals who are over the age of 18. By participating in this online research study that aims to examine the relationship between geographic location and physical/psychological well-being in active duty service members and veterans, respondents could be 1 of 40 people to win a \$50 gift certificate to Amazon.com while also providing valuable information that will promote a greater understanding and awareness of the specific needs of veterans. This information will help the researchers not only better describe what veterans need, but will also help researchers develop new programs and initiatives to meet the needs of veterans and active duty service members.

Study participation is expected to take between 45-60 minutes using our online survey provided at the end of this message. Responses will be entirely anonymous and you have the option to exit the survey at any time.

Forty \$50 gift certificates to Amazon.com will be randomly awarded to participants at the end of data collection. To participate in the drawing, you will need to provide an email address; however, your email address will not be connected to your survey responses in any way. You have the option of completing the survey, but not participating in the drawing if you do not wish to. This project has been approved by the Georgia Southern University Institutional Review Board (H17287).

Please visit the following web address to complete the survey and to access an informed consent

further explaining the project and your rights as a research participant.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/vethealth2017Is>

Finally, if you do not identify as active duty and or a veteran, and/or you are interested in helping with this project, please consider forwarding this message on to other individuals that may be interested in participating. Thank you in advance for your assistance with this project.

from K. Bryant Smalley, PhD, PsyD, MBA, Executive Director

Annual MCA Awards and National Executive Committee Members

Please make your nominations now for our Annual Awards and NEC.

Each year we present three awards to deserving individuals who represent the values and principles we embrace and advance as an organization. The three are:

The National Citizenship Award - presented to an individual or individuals who make a significant contribution in public service and who support the values and needs of our nation's military members and their families.

The G, William Dando Volunteer Service Award - Our award for volunteer service is named for Chaplain Dando and honors one of our members who exemplifies a life long commitment to sacrificial service.

The David E. White Leadership Award - Presented by the Military Officers Association of America to a chaplain with a lifetime commitment and vision for Joint service, inter-agency collaboration, and overall ministry professionalism.

We also elect **four new members to our NEC** each year seeking to have all segments of our membership represented on our governing board.

Please send your nominations and supporting reasons to chaplains@mca-usa.org. Nominations will be received through June 30. Thank you.

Religion and Spirituality: The Impact on Chaplains

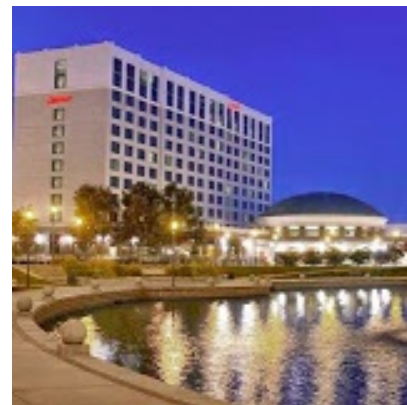
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If you missed the June 28th edition of the Newsgram [click here](#)

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