

2020

National Association of Congregational Christian Churches

Thanksgiving Proclamation

On October 3, 1789, President George Washington issued the first Thanksgiving Proclamation, saying “. . . it is the duty of all Nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey his will, to be grateful for his benefits, and humbly to implore his protection and favor.” While that statement is perpetually true, it seems more true than ever in 2020.

It was 400 years ago this month – several generations before General Washington’s declaration of a national Day of Thanksgiving – that our spiritual and ecclesiastical foreparents stepped off the Mayflower on to the shores of Cape Cod after 66 harrowing days at sea. Conditions were challenging, to say the least, and they lost many of the family and friends with whom they left the shores of Europe. With the help of the indigenous Wampanoag people – a people with whom they might have had immediate conflict – the Pilgrims were able to eventually plant and harvest sustainable crops, and withstand the harsh climate of the New England shores.

Today, we are not unlike those Pilgrims –
we have settled in uncharted territory;
we have lost many family and friends;
we need to band together to get through these challenges.

With those things in mind, let us give thanks:
for every breath, which is a gift from God;
for every moment together, knowing the next is not assured;
for every provision God supplies, no matter how meager;
for every member of our support system, without which we could not survive.

May God grant us all the courage, grace, strength, faith, and tenacity to forge ahead as we face whatever challenges might lay before us. With Jesus as our Lord and the Holy Spirit as our guide, we can march with confidence into 2021. May the blessings of God be with all of you this holiday season!

-Rev. Dr. Shawn Stapleton

