

THE GOOD NEWS



A LETTER FROM FATHER BRIAN



I suggest our Independence Day is important enough, that whatever day you may read this, we are afforded an opportunity to reflect on our identity both as Americans and Episcopalians.

Back in 1776, once the colonies were no longer British but American, the Anglican Church of England was no longer welcome and re-emerged as the American Episcopal Church – rooted in the faith of the Church of England, but with a uniquely American vision, spirit, and energy.

Beginning in 1776, the US and TEC grew up side-by-side in this new nation. And although there is separation between church and state, I'd like us to focus on some of the similarities between the governance of the US and TEC:

- The US has an elected **President**.
- TEC has an elected **Presiding Bishop**. The PB oversees the executive functions of the Church much like the President.
- The US government is governed by a **Senate and House of Representatives** (Congress).



Dear Ignatians ~

The Fourth of July is the Crown Jewel of the summer season. All winter long we look forward to summer; and the celebration of our Independence Day is the centerpiece, framed by Memorial Day and Labor Day.

- TEC is governed by the **House of bishops and the House of Deputies**. They set legislation through General Convention every 3 years, and meet in between as appropriate.
- The US is made up of 50 geographic **states**.
- TEC is made up of 108 territorial **dioceses**:
 - Some states are their own diocese (*e.g.*, MN and IA);
 - Some hold more than one diocese (*e.g.*, IL has 2 and WI has 3); and
 - Some cross state lines (*e.g.*, Diocese of the Central Gulf Coast includes parts of FL, AL and MS).
- Each state has its own elected **Governor**.
- Each diocese has its own elected **Bishop**.
- Each state has a **Senate and State Representatives**.
- Each diocese is represented at its annual diocesan convention by both **Clergy and Laity Delegates**.
- Each state is made up of **municipalities**, and has a **capitol** in one of its cities.
- Each diocese is made up of **congregations**, and has a **cathedral** in one of its cities.
- Each municipality has its own **elected mayor, city manager, or village president**.
- Each congregation has its own **rector, vicar, priest-in-charge, or dean** in the case of a cathedral.
- Each municipality has its own **elected city or town council**.
- Each congregation has its own **elected vestry, bishop's committee, or chapter** in the case of a cathedral.

These governance structures within TEC closely parallel the structures of the US – and it's no coincidence, since the founders of the US and TEC were in some cases the same people (including George Washington who was one of several Anglican founders).

A lot of similarities, but one important difference: While governed by democratic principles:

- The US is a **Representative Republic**, and
- TEC is a **Theocracy** with “the One and Only God at its head.”

While comparing the governance structures of the US and TEC, I also think it's of some interest to compare the message their flags express:

- Our American Flag represents the freedoms and rights guaranteed to us in the **Constitution** and its **Bill of Rights**, and perhaps most of all our American flag is a powerful symbol of liberty as set forth in the **Declaration of Independence**.

7 red stripes and 6 white stripes represent the 13 original states. 50 white stars on a blue back ground represent our current 50 states.

- And the Flag of TEC offers a brief history lesson through its design:

After the American Revolution, TEC was established in the 13 original states as a separate group from its parent Church of England. Red, white, and blue are the colors of the American Flag and the Flag of TEC.

On TEC Flag, **the white field with a red cross is St. George's Cross**, the patron saint of the Church of England. This remembers TEC's roots are in the Church of England.

There are **nine miniature crosses on the field of blue** symbolizing the **nine dioceses that met in Philadelphia in 1789** to ratify the initial constitution of “The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America.”

The crosslets are formed after the St. Andrew's Cross. St. Andrew is the patron saint of Scotland. This remembers the Scottish Church's part in our history as their Bishops ordained Samuel Seabury as our first American Episcopal Bishop in 1784. (England could not ordain Bishop Seabury as the Church of England would have required him to pledge obedience to the English monarch.)

And we even have our own Betsy Ross:

In 1918 the Diocese of Long Island was going to celebrate its 50th Anniversary. Their Bishop asked William Baldwin to head the committee planning the celebration. They planned a great procession including the diocesan banner, 20 banners for diocesan societies, and one banner for each parish

and mission. A total of 170 banners, but there was *no* banner for the Episcopal Church – the National Church had never made one.

So Mr. Baldwin took it upon himself to present a proposed Flag at the next General Convention. However, his sketch wasn't enough, and the Convention requested a full-size sample. So during lunch he went to Woolworth's and bought a white crib sheet, red and blue fabric, scissors, needles and thread. He stayed up late that night in his hotel room, and the next morning he presented a full-size Episcopal Church Flag. That General Convention of 1923 approved its use, although the Flag wasn't adopted as our official flag until 1940. And when William Baldwin died, his Flag fittingly draped his casket.

Another the Fourth of July has come and gone:

- As Americans we gratefully pledge allegiance to the US.
- At the same time, as Episcopalians we celebrate our relationship with Jesus in a nation where we are free to also pledge our allegiance as citizens of God's eternal kingdom, through Christ our Lord.

May God continue to bless the United States and the Episcopal Church!

~ Fr. Brian

Welcome Back to Church!

During Phase 4 we invite you to join us for Holy Eucharist
Saturday 5pm ~ Sunday 8 & 10am ~ Wednesday 6pm
(Both Sunday Eucharists will also be available via Zoom)

Face masks and social distancing is expected; using odd number (marked) pews for occupancy and even number pews vacant to assist social distancing; we provide you with "one touch" worship materials, wipes and hand sanitizers.
