

AN INDEPENDENCE DAY REFLECTION, adapted from Independence Day Litany and Prayers 2004, worship resources written for Mt. Carmel Evangelical Lutheran Church in Portland, Oregon. © Lisa Frenz. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

“Reading 6 ‘Go for Broke’” added by Church of the Crossroads, 2010

O Beautiful for Spacious Skies (congregation singing)

*O beautiful for spacious skies,  
for amber waves of grain,  
for purple mountain majesties  
above the fruited plain:  
America! America!  
God shed your grace on thee,  
and crown thy good with brotherhood  
from sea to shining sea.*

**Reading 1 1810 Tecumseh protesting land sales to Governor William Henry Harrison**

"The way, the only way to stop this evil is for the red man to unite in claiming a common and equal right in the land, as it was at first and should be now – for it was never divided but belongs to all. No tribe has the right to sell, even to each other, much less to strangers. . . . Sell a country! Why not sell the air, the great sea, as well as the earth? Did not the Great Spirit make them all for the use of his children?"

**Reading 2 William D. Ruckelshaus: Oral History Interview**

The big difference between the early 1960s and the 1970s, was the shift of public opinion. There was no public support for the environment in Indiana in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Anything done was the result of individuals like myself or Jerry Hansler deciding, "This is terrible, we've got to stop some of this. After all, the law says it's wrong." . . . Public support only began to explode in the late 1960s. It led to the creation of Environmental Protection Agency, which never would have been established had it not been for public demand . . . [Y]ou've got to have public support for environmental protection or it won't happen.

## Responsive Litany

**One: God of love and mercy, you have lavished your creative might on this land, giving us an abundance of natural beauty and resources.**

All: May we always remember that this earth is yours and we are its caretakers.  
Guide us that we may use what you have given us with care and thanksgiving.

O Beautiful for Spacious Skies (congregation singing)

*O beautiful for pilgrim feet,  
whose stern, impassioned stress  
a thoroughfare for freedom beat  
across the wilderness:  
America! America!  
God mend thine ev'ry flaw,  
confirm thy soul in self-control,  
thy liberty in law.*

### **Reading 3 From the Constitutional Rights Foundation**

During World War II, . . . General John L. DeWitt was responsible for the defense of the West Coast. . . . he believed that people of Japanese ancestry, citizens and non-citizens alike, could not be trusted. He said that the lack of any sabotage on the West Coast only proved that they were waiting for the Japanese invasion to begin.

General DeWitt and others in the War Dept. developed a plan to remove all the Issei and Nisei from their homes in the Western states and lock them in prison camps. The Justice Department, FBI, and Navy intelligence all concluded that such a drastic action was not necessary. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, however, accepted General DeWitt's recommendation, and, [o]n February 19, 1942, . . . issued Executive Order 9066 [giving] General DeWitt authority to . . . [carry out his plan, imprisoning 120,000 persons of Japanese ancestry] . . . .

### **Reading 4 Thomas Abraham, Tennessee affiliate in landmark challenge to USA PATRIOT Act, November 3, 2003**

. . . The USA PATRIOT Act was signed into law in October of 2001. Section 215 of the Act gave the FBI vastly expanded powers to secretly obtain records and personal belongings of anyone in the country, who were then prohibited from telling anyone of these information sweeps.

. . . Bridge [Refugee Services, an affiliate of Church World Service's Immigration and Refugee Program], faced orders to turn over personal information disclosed to it in strict confidence. Instead, Bridge and 5 other plaintiffs joined the first-ever legal challenge of Section 215, filed in July of 2003 by the American Civil Liberties Union, alleging that Section 215 violated the First, Fourth and Fifth Amendments.

. . . Bridge board member Lawrence Beach said "Every time something happens to this country that threatens it, we seem to come up with laws that are too broad and repressive. Each time the country has backed off. Hopefully, wiser heads will prevail, and we'll pull back from infringing individual liberties for the sake of the whole."

Responsive Litany

**One: God of love and mercy, you shower us with mercy not condemnation, with love not hate, with acceptance not fear.**

All: May we always remember that justice is more than law. Give us the wisdom to see injustice disguised as "protection" and the courage and knowledge to challenge such laws.

O Beautiful for Spacious Skies (congregation singing)

*O beautiful for heroes proved  
in liberating strife,  
who more than self their country loved,  
and mercy more than life:  
America! America!  
May God thy gold refine,  
till all success be nobleness,  
and ev'ry gain divine.*

## **Reading 5 Craig J. Renner, The Forgotten Black Regiments of World War I**

. . . Four all-black US Army units were detailed to the French army during World War I. The black soldiers "had to put up with trench foot, pneumonia, snakes, even quicksand," quite apart from the racial discrimination within the military that they had long endured. .

. . [N]o plaque or statue in the United States commemorates their service; but in Monthois, France, a monument honors their courage and service. . . . Black troops had ably served in combat since the Revolution. Nevertheless, in early 1917, the country was divided about the use of black troops in battle. Southerners especially were uncomfortable with the notion of highly trained and armed black troops. But tactical

concerns were also expressed: Military officials claimed that integrated units would fail to remain cohesive, especially in combat.

**Reading 6:** excerpted from:

[http://www.goforbroke.org/history/history\\_historical\\_veterans\\_442nd.asp](http://www.goforbroke.org/history/history_historical_veterans_442nd.asp)

The motto of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team was “go for broke.” It’s a gambling term that means risking everything on one great effort to win big. The soldiers of the 442nd needed to win big. They were Nisei - American-born sons of Japanese immigrants. They fought two wars: the Germans in Europe and the prejudice in America.

The Hawaii-born Nisei, also known as “Buddhaheads,” made up about two-thirds of the regiment with the remaining third from the mainland. In April 1943, the two groups arrived for training in Mississippi. Immediately, they fought with each other.

The Buddhaheads thought the mainlanders were sullen and snobby. Soon misunderstandings, fueled by alcohol, turned into fistfights. In fact, that was how mainlanders got the name “Katonk.” It was the sound their heads made when they hit the floor.

The friction between the two groups was so bad that the military high command considered disbanding the 442<sup>nd</sup> thinking that the men could never fight overseas as a unit.

The Army sent a group of Buddhaheads to visit the camps in Arkansas. When the trucks rolled past the barbed wire fence, past the guard towers armed with machine guns pointed at the camp residents, past the rough barracks where whole families crowded in small compartments with no privacy - suddenly the Buddhaheads understood. Word of the camps spread quickly, and the Buddhaheads gained a whole new respect for the Katonks. Immediately the men in the 442nd became united - like a clenched fist.

The 442nd was the most decorated unit for its size and length of service, in the entire history of the U.S. Military. The 4,000 men who initially came in April 1943 had to be replaced nearly 3.5 times. In total, about 14,000 men served, ultimately earning 9,486 Purple Hearts, 21 Medals of Honor and an unprecedented eight Presidential Unit Citations.

## Reading 7 The Vietnam Veterans Memorial

The Three Servicemen Statue of the National Vietnam Memorial depicts a white, a Cuban-American, and an African-American soldier. Sculptor Frederick Hart stated: "The portrayal of the figures is consistent with history. They wear the uniform and carry the equipment of war; they are young. The contrast between the innocence of their youth and the weapons of war underscores the poignancy of their sacrifice. There is about them the physical contact and sense of unity that bespeaks the bonds of love and sacrifice that is the nature of men at war. And yet they are each alone. Their strength and their vulnerability are both evident. Their true heroism lies in these bonds of loyalty in the face of their aloneness and their vulnerability."

Responsive Litany

**One: God of love and mercy, you have filled this nation with peoples from all races and cultures, blending us into a country blessed with diversity and strength.**

All: Remind us that patriotism, courage and love of country are qualities we all share. Make us alive to the subtleties of prejudice which makes us unaware of our ignorance. Open our hearts and minds that we may rejoice in our diversity.

O Beautiful for Spacious Skies (congregation singing)

*O beautiful for patriot dream  
that sees beyond the years  
thine alabaster cities gleam,  
undimmed by human tears:  
America! America!  
God shed your grace on thee,  
and crown thy good with brotherhood  
from sea to shining sea.*

## Reading 7 1973, Gordon Sinclair, "LET'S BE PERSONAL" Topic: "The Americans" Broadcast June 5, 1973 CFRB, Toronto, Ontario

[T]his Canadian thinks it is time to speak up for the Americans as the most generous and possibly the least-appreciated people in all the earth. As long as sixty years ago, when I first started to read newspapers, I read of floods on the Yellow River and the Yangtze. Who rushed in with men and money to help? The Americans did. They have helped control floods on the Nile, the Amazon, the Ganges and the Niger. Today, the

rich bottom land of the Mississippi is under water and no foreign land has sent a dollar to help. Germany, Japan and, to a lesser extent, Britain and Italy, were lifted out of the debris of war by the Americans who poured in billions of dollars and forgave other billions in debts. None of those countries is today paying even the interest on its remaining debts to the United States. When the franc was in danger of collapsing in 1956, it was the Americans who propped it up . . . . When distant cities are hit by earthquakes, it is the United States that hurries into help...

### **Reading 8 Mercy Corps Responds to North Korea Tragedy, April 28, 2004**

Mercy Corps is a US based humanitarian organization of nearly 4000 professionals. Working side by side with the poor, they bring diverse groups together to create societies that are more peaceful, open, democratic and economically strong.

In 2004, after a series of massive train explosions in Ryongchon, North Korea, a busy town near the Chinese border, resulted in death and overwhelming casualties and property damage, Mercy Corps mobilized staff and resources. Survivors were left homeless, suffering critical burns, broken bones and respiratory problems. A Mercy Corps shipment of medicines and medical supplies arrived within days and provisions were delivered to local hospitals and treatment centers for immediate use. Aid workers were immediately dispatched. Mercy Corps worked with the North Korean government to ensure a quick and effective response to the tragedy.

Responsive Litany

**One: God of love and mercy, you have blessed this land of ours with more riches than most of the world can comprehend, and with an energy and vitality that can produce wonders and marvels.**

All: May we always act to share our wealth, taking the gifts you have given us to the world, reaching out to friend and foe, alike.

O Beautiful, Our Spacious Skies (congregation singing)

*How beautiful for spacious skies, our amber waves of grain;  
our purple mountains as they rise above the fruited plain.  
America! America! God's gracious gifts abound,  
and more and more we're grateful for life's bounty all around.*

*Indigenous and immigrant, our daughters and our sons;  
O may we never rest content till all are truly one.  
America! America! God grant that we may be  
a sisterhood and brotherhood from sea to shining sea.*

Responsive Litany

**One: God of love and mercy, you have blessed this land making it a great and wonderful place to live and work and play.**

All: Instill in us the humility which comes from the knowledge that we have done nothing to deserve the blessings we have. Sensitize us to the dignity of all people that we may respect their individuality of culture and spirituality. Lead us to understand their needs within the context of their lives. Supply us with the wisdom to assist them without imposing our customs upon them. Continue to direct and enlighten us that we may be servants to the world and all peoples. We ask this in Jesus' name, who manifests God yet is servant to us all. Amen.

O Beautiful, Our Spacious Skies (congregation singing)

*How beautiful, sincere lament, the wisdom born of tears,  
the courage called for to repent the bloodshed through the years.  
America! America! God grant that we may be  
a nation blessed with none oppressed, true land of liberty.*

*How beautiful, all continents, and islands in the sea  
That dream of peace, nonviolence, all people living free.  
America! America! God grant that we may be  
A global sphere where people here all live in harmony.*

\*PASSING THE PEACE