

Saturday, July 4, 2020

Dear Members, Friends, and Guests of Desert Hills Lutheran Church,

Happy 4th of July. Our real Independence Day is July 2, 1776; July 4 is the day when John Hancock put the first signature on the Declaration of Independence to spread the word. For my note today I went into a file and found some history on the 56 men who signed the Declaration of Independence.

Five signers were captured by the British as traitors and tortured before they died. Twelve had their homes ransacked and burned. Two lost their sons serving in the Revolutionary Army; another had two sons captured. Nine of the 56 fought and died from wounds or hardships of the Revolutionary War. They signed and they pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor.

What kind of men were they?

Twenty-four were lawyers and jurists.

Eleven were merchants, nine were farmers and large plantation owners, men of means and educated.

But they signed the Declaration of Independence knowing full well that if captured the penalty would be death.

Carter Braxton of Virginia, a wealthy planter and trader, saw his ships swept from the sea by the British Navy. He sold his home and properties to pay his debts, and died in rags.

Thomas McKeam was hounded by the British and was forced to keep moving his family. He served in the Congress without pay, and his family was kept in hiding. His possessions were taken from him, and poverty was his reward.

Vandals and soldiers looted the properties of Dillery, Hall, Clymer, Walton, Gwinnett, Heyward, Ruttledge, and Middleton.

At the battle of Yorktown, Thomas Nelson, Jr., noted that the British General Cornwallis had confiscated his home for its headquarters. Nelson quietly urged George Washington to open fire. The home was destroyed. Nelson died bankrupt.

Francis Lewis had his home and properties destroyed. The enemy jailed his wife, and she died within a few months.

John Hart was driven from his dying wife's bedside. Their 13 children fled for their lives. His fields and his gristmill were laid to waste. For more than a year he lived in forests and caves, returning home to find his wife dead and his children vanished.

Freedom always comes with a price. As Christians we know that better than all. I'm thankful for all those who gave their lives for the freedom we enjoy.

Have a blessed 4th.

Pastor Martin