

# Georgia insight

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[www.georgiainsight.org](http://www.georgiainsight.org)  
“She hath done what she could.”  
Mark 14:8a  
“...and having done all ... stand.”  
Ephesians 6:13c

## Prayer<sup>1</sup>, a U.S. Staple

**1775** – The first Continental Congress called for a National Day of Prayer<sup>1</sup> (NDP).

**1873** – Abraham Lincoln called for an NDP.

**1952** – Congress established an annual NDP, which President Truman signed into law.

**1988** – That law was amended to designate the first Thursday in May as the annual NDP.

**1789-2022** Presidents made 151 national calls to prayer, humiliation, fasting, thanksgiving.

**1952-2022** there were 74 Presidential Proclamations for an NDP.

**1952** and following, every President has signed an NDP proclamation.

- 35 of the 45 U.S. Presidents signed proclamations for NDP.
- Three of the Presidents that did not sign a proclamation died while serving in office.
- Two Presidents not included in the count – William Howard Taft and Warren Gamaliel Harding – signed Proclamations for Thanksgiving and Prayer.
- Since 1775 and counting, 1,526 state and federal calls for national prayer are recorded.

**May 24, 1774, Thomas Jefferson drafted a Resolution for a Day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer** to be observed as the British blockaded Boston Harbor. Robert Carter Nicholas introduced the Resolution in the Virginia House of Burgesses, and, with support of Patrick Henry, Richard Henry Lee and George Mason, it passed unanimously.

**April 15, 1775, four days before the Battle of Lexington, John Hancock declared:** “...the 11th of May next be set apart as a Day of Public Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer...to confess the sins...to implore the Forgiveness of all our Transgression.”

**April 19, 1775, Connecticut Governor Jonathan Trumbull, in a Proclamation of a Day of Fasting and Prayer, beseeched that:** “God would graciously pour out His Holy Spirit on us to bring us to a thorough repentance and effectual reformation that our iniquities may not be our ruin; ...and make the land a mountain of Holiness, and habitation of righteousness forever.”

**June 12, 1775, just under two months after the Battles of Lexington and Concord, President John Hancock and the Continental Congress declared:** “Congress...do earnestly recommend, that Thursday, the 12th of July next, be observed...as a Day...that we may with united hearts...unfeignedly confess...our many sins...to the All-wise, Omnipotent and merciful Disposer of all Events, humbly beseeching Him to forgive our iniquities....”

**July 5, 1775, the Georgia Provincial Congress passed:** “A motion...that...his Excellency the Governor...appoint a Day of Fasting and Prayer throughout this Province, on account of the disputes subsisting between America and the Parent State.”

**July 7, 1775, Georgia’s Provincial Governor replied:** “Gentlemen: I...must premise, that I cannot consider that meeting as constitutional; but as the request is expressed in such loyal and dutiful terms, and the ends proposed being such as every good man must most ardently wish for, I will certainly appoint a Day of Fasting and Prayer to be observed throughout this Province..”

**July 12, 1775, in a letter to his wife, John Adams explained the decision of the Continental Congress** to declare a Day of Public Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer: “We have appointed a Continental fast. Millions will be upon their knees at once before their great Creator, imploring His forgiveness and blessing; His smiles on American Council and arms.”

<sup>1</sup> Source: National Day of Prayer Taskforce website

**March 6, 1776, George Washington ordered:** *"Thursday, the 7th...being set apart...as a Day of Fasting, Prayer and Humiliation, 'to implore the Lord and Giver of all victory to pardon our manifold sins and wickedness, and that it would please Him to bless the Continental army with His divine favor and protection,' all officers and soldiers are strictly enjoined to pay all due reverence and attention on that day to the sacred duties to the Lord of hosts for His mercies already received, and for those blessings which our holiness and uprightness of life can alone encourage us to hope through His mercy obtain."*

**May 15, 1776, General George Washington proclaimed:** *"The Continental Congress having ordered Friday the 17th instant to be observed as a Day humbly to supplicate the mercy of Almighty God...to pardon all our manifold sins and transgressions...establish...America upon a solid and lasting foundation; the General commands all officers and soldiers...by their unfeigned...observance...they may incline the Lord and Giver of victory to prosper our arms."*

**March 16, 1776, the Continental Congress passed without dissent a resolution** presented by General William Livingston declaring: *"Congress...do earnestly recommend Friday, the 17th day of May be observed by the colonies as a Day of Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer; that we may, with united hearts, confess...our manifold sins and transgressions...sincere repentance...appease God's righteous displeasure, and, through...Jesus Christ, obtain this pardon and forgiveness."*

**April 12, 1778, at Valley Forge, General Washington ordered:** *"The Honorable Congress having thought proper to recommend to the United States of America to set apart Wednesday, the 22nd inst., to be observed...with one voice, the righteous dispensations of Providence may be acknowledged...His goodness and mercy towards our arms supplicated and implored...no work shall be done thereon, and that the several chaplains do prepare discourses."*

**November 11, 1779, Virginia Governor Thomas Jefferson signed a Proclamation stating:** *"Congress...hath thought proper...to recommend to the several States...a day of publick and solemn Thanksgiving to Almighty God, for his mercies, and of Prayer, for the continuance of his favour...That He would go forth with our hosts and crown our arms with victory...grant to His church...Divine Grace, and pour out His Holy Spirit on all Ministers of the Gospel; that He would bless and prosper...education, and spread...Christian knowledge through...the earth..."*

**April 6, 1780, General Washington ordered at Morristown:** *"Congress having been pleased by their Proclamation of the 11th of last month to appoint Wednesday the 22nd instant to be set apart and observed as a day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer...there should be no labor or recreations on that day."*

**October 11, 1782, the Congress of the Confederation set the date:** *"It being the indispensable duty of all nations...to offer up their supplications to Almighty God...the United States in Congress...do hereby recommend it to the inhabitants of these states in general, to observe...the 28th day of November next, as a Day of Solemn Thanksgiving to God for all his mercies."*

**November 8, 1783, at the conclusion of the Revolutionary War, Massachusetts Governor John Hancock declared:** *"The Citizens of these United States have every Reason for Praise and Gratitude to the God of their salvation...I do...appoint...the 11th day of December next (the day recommended by the Congress to all the States) to be religiously observed as a Day of Thanksgiving and Prayer, that...he hath been pleased to continue to us the Light of the Blessed Gospel... to cause pure Religion and Virtue to flourish...and to fill the world with his glory."*

**February 21, 1786, New Hampshire Governor John Langdon proclaimed** a Day of Public Fasting and Prayer: *"It having been the laudable practice of this State, at the opening of the Spring, to set apart a day...that a true spirit of repentance and humiliation may be poured out upon all...that he would rain down righteousness upon the earth, revive religion, and spread abroad the knowledge of the true God, the Saviour of man, throughout the world. And all servile labor and recreations are forbidden on said day."*

**October 31, 1785, in the Virginia Legislature, James Madison introduced a bill titled:** *“For Appointing Days of Public Fasting and Thanksgiving,”* which included: *“Forfeiting fifty pounds for every failure, not having a reasonable excuse.”* Yale College had as its requirement in 1787: *“All the scholars are obliged to attend Divine worship in the College Chapel on the Lord’s Day and on Days of Fasting and Thanksgiving appointed by public authority.”*

**1787 at the Constitutional Convention, Benjamin Franklin stated:** *“In the beginning of the Contest with Great Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayer in this room for Divine protection.”*

**October 3, 1789, in the same week Congress passed the Bill of Rights, President George Washington declared:** *“It is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the Providence of Almighty God, to obey His will...and humbly to implore His protection and favor; and Whereas both Houses of Congress have by their joint Committee requested me ‘to recommend to the People of the United States a Day of Public Thanksgiving and Prayer to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many signal favors of Almighty God, especially by affording them an opportunity peaceably to establish a form of government for their safety and happiness’...”*

*“I do recommend...the 26th day of November next, to be devoted by the People of these United States to the service of that great and glorious Being, who is the beneficent Author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be.... Humbly offering our prayers...to the great Lord and Ruler of Nations, and beseech Him to pardon our national and other transgressions.”*

**January 1, 1796, President Washington proclaimed a Day of Prayer after the Whiskey Rebellion in western Pennsylvania:** *“All persons within the United States...render sincere and hearty thanks to the great Ruler of nations...particularly for the possession of constitutions of government...and fervently beseech the kind Author of these blessings...to establish habits of sobriety, order, and morality and piety.”*

**March 23, 1798 and again on March 6, 1799, President John Adams declared a Day of Prayer during a threatened war with France:** *“As...the people of the United States are still held in jeopardy by...insidious acts of a foreign nation, as well as by the dissemination among them of those principles subversive to the foundations of all religious, moral, and social obligations...I hereby recommend...a Day of Solemn Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer; That the citizens...call to mind our numerous offenses against the Most High God, confess them before Him with the sincerest penitence, implore His pardoning mercy, through the Great Mediator and Redeemer, for our past transgressions, and that through the grace of His Holy Spirit, we may be disposed and enabled to yield a more suitable obedience to His righteous requisitions....‘Righteousness exalteth a nation but sin is a reproach to any people.’”*

**July 9, 1812, during the War of 1812, James Madison proclaimed a Day of Prayer by stating:** *“I do therefore recommend...rendering the Sovereign of the Universe...public homage...acknowledging the transgressions which might justly provoke His divine displeasure...seeking His merciful forgiveness...and with a reverence for the unerring precept of our holy religion, to do to others as they would require that others should do to them.”*

**July 23, 1813, again, James Madison called a Day of Prayer,** referring to *“religion, that gift of Heaven for the good of man.”* When the British marched on Washington, D.C., the town was evacuated.... The British burned the White House, Capitol and public buildings on August 25, 1814. Suddenly dark clouds rolled in and a tornado touched down...blowing off roofs and knocking down chimneys on British troops. Two cannons were lifted...dropped yards away. A British historian wrote: *“More British soldiers were killed by this stroke of nature than from all the firearms the American troops had mustered.”* British forces fled and rains extinguished the fires.

**November 16, 1814, and again, James Madison called** *“...a Day of Public Humiliation and Fasting and of Prayer to Almighty God for the safety and welfare of these States...of confessing their sins and transgressions, and...vows of repentance...that He would...pardon all their offenses.”*

**April 13, 1841, after President Harrison died, President John Tyler called for a Day of Humility:** *"When a Christian people feel themselves to be overtaken by a great public calamity, it becomes them to humble themselves under the dispensation of Divine Providence."*

**July 3, 1849, President Zachary Taylor's Proclamation during a cholera epidemic:** *"The providence of God has manifested itself in the visitation of a fearful pestilence...throughout the land, it is fitting that a people whose reliance has ever been in His protection should humble themselves before His throne...acknowledging past transgressions, ask a continuance of the Divine mercy. It is earnestly recommended that the first Friday in August be observed throughout the United States as a Day of Fasting, Humiliation and Prayer."*

**December 14, 1860, President James Buchanan's Proclamation to confess individual and national sin:** *"In this the hour of our calamity and peril to whom shall we resort for relief but to the God of our fathers? His omnipotent arm only can save us from the awful effects of our own crimes and follies...Let us...unite in...confessing our individual and national sins...Let me invoke every individual...to feel a personal responsibility to God and his country for keeping this day holy."*

**August 12, 1861, President Lincoln's Proclamation after the defeat at Bull Run:** *"It is fit...to acknowledge and revere the Supreme Government of God; to bow in humble submission to His chastisement; to confess and deplore their sins...in the full conviction that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom...Therefore I, Abraham Lincoln...do appoint the last Thursday in September next as a Day of Humiliation, Prayer and Fasting for all the people of the nation."*

**March 30, 1863, President Lincoln Proclaimed a National Day of Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer:** *"The awful calamity of civil war...may be but a punishment inflicted upon us for our presumptuous sins to the needful end of our national reformation...We have forgotten God...We have vainly imagined...that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own...we have become...too proud to pray to the God that made us! It behooves us then to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins."*

**April 29, 1865, after Lincoln was killed, President Johnson Proclaimed:** *"The 25th day of next month was recommended as a Day for Special Humiliation and Prayer in consequence of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln...but Whereas my attention has since been called to the fact that the day aforesaid is sacred to large numbers of Christians as one of rejoicing for the ascension of the Savior...[the] aforesaid should be postponed until...the 1st day of June."*

**May 11, 1918, during World War I, President Wilson Proclaimed:** *"It being the duty peculiarly incumbent in a time of war humbly and devoutly to acknowledge our dependence on Almighty God...I, Woodrow Wilson...proclaim...a Day of Public Humiliation, Prayer and Fasting, and do exhort my fellow-citizens...to pray Almighty God that He may forgive our sins."*

**June 6, 1944, during the D-Day invasion of Normandy in World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt prayed:** *"Almighty God, our sons, pride of our nation, this day have set upon a mighty endeavor, a struggle to preserve our Republic, our Religion and our Civilization, and to set free a suffering humanity...Help us, Almighty God, to rededicate ourselves in renewed faith in Thee in this hour of great sacrifice."*

**August 16, 1945, when World War II ended, President Harry Truman declared:** *"The warlords of Japan...have surrendered unconditionally...Our global victory...has come with the help of God...Let us...dedicate ourselves to follow in His ways."*

**April 17, 1952, President Truman made the National Day of Prayer an annual observance.**

**January 27, 1983, President Ronald Reagan's Proclamation:** *"In 1775, the Continental Congress proclaimed the first National Day of Prayer...In 1783, the Treaty of Paris...ended the Revolutionary War during which a NDP had been proclaimed every spring for eight years."*

**May 5, 1988 President Reagan set the first Thursday in May as the Day's annual date.**

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