

Proclamation for Day of Prayer and Fasting Massachusetts Provincial Congress (1775)

Historical Background of Document:

John Hancock, signer of the Declaration of Independence and first elected Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, while presiding over the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, ordered a day of prayer and fasting on April 15, 1775. This proclamation was timely, for only three days after this declaration, Paul Revere, William Dawes and Samuel Prescott made their famous ride through the countryside to warn the American leaders that the British army was marching towards Lexington and Concord, where ultimately would be heard “the shot heard round the world,” the first gunshots of the war for American independence.

Text of Proclamation:

“In circumstances dark as these, it becomes us, as Men and Christians, to reflect that, whilst every prudent Measure should be taken to ward off the impending Judgements. . . . all confidence must be withheld from the Means we use and reposed only on that GOD who rules in the Armies of Heaven, and without whose Blessing the best human Counsels are but Foolishness—and all created Power Vanity.”

“It is the Happiness of his Church that, when the Powers of Earth and Hell combine against it... that the Throne of Grace is of the easiest access—and its Appeal thither is graciously invited by the Father of Mercies, who has assured it, that when his Children ask Bread he will not give them a Stone....”

“RESOLVED, That it be, and hereby is recommended to the good People of this Colony of all Denominations, that THURSDAY the Eleventh Day 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...and a blessing on the Husbandry, Manufactures, and other lawful Employments of this People; and especially that the union of the American Colonies in Defense of their Rights (for hitherto we desire to thank Almighty GOD) may be preserved and confirmed....And that AMERICA may soon behold a gracious Interposition of Heaven.”

“By Order of the [Massachusetts] Provincial Congress, John Hancock, President.”