



The Anniversary of our Interdependence

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2026 marks the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence—a document born out of dissatisfaction with a status quo rooted in an imbalance of power. In declaring their refusal to continue to live in subjugation and demanding freedom from tyranny, its authors asserted that autonomy and freedom were not mortal whims, but divinely bestowed, inalienable rights. And yet, these aspirations for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are shrouded in the reality that their opportunity and promise have long been applied to the few, rather than the many. This reality stems from a failure to recognize that independence from tyranny requires the constant pursuit of interdependent community rooted in justice.

Anniversaries are strange things. Some are moments of joy, while others invoke a resurgence of the pain and grief wrought by trauma. Anniversaries are a marker of the time before and the time after. For my colleagues and I who work in the field of humanitarian accompaniment, anniversaries of conflict, natural disaster, and other life-altering and world-changing events are a regular part of the job. As much as these moments present opportunities for remembrance and mourning, they are also opportunities to reflect on the awe-inspiring power of community, and the reality that the successes of our humanitarian responses are built on interdependence rather than independence and are led by the voices of the vulnerable.

In this moment, the forces of extractive and exclusive individualism often feel stronger than the voices



of inclusivity and community. I feel the strain of division, and I hear the cries for peace and justice. As the complexity of the world's challenges seem to mount each day, I feel the weight of the moment's urgency alongside a longing for the quiet stillness of a boring day. As a colleague recently reminded me, the answer to this complexity lies in the simple truth of the Gospel: protect the vulnerable.

In this anniversary year of the Declaration of Independence, let us declare a renewed commitment to our interdependence. It is my prayer that we all be granted the wisdom to learn new stories, the patience to listen, the courage and creativity to reimagine, and the opportunity to celebrate the joy of community along the way.

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