



The Washington Flyer
New Years Special Edition

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”
Luke 2:14

Special New Years message from Maureen Van Den Berg, AACCS Policy Analyst:

The Christmas season of 1862 was marked with sadness and turmoil as our country was in the midst of the Civil War. On Christmas Day, President Abraham Lincoln and his wife spent their time visiting soldiers in hospitals. Holiday celebrations carried the heavy weight of reminders that the country was at war and people were hurting. Yet, it was during this holiday season that President Lincoln signed one of the most important documents in the history of our country.

On January 1, 1863, the war-weary President signed the Emancipation Proclamation which declared that “all persons held as slaves . . . are, and henceforward shall be free.” The signing was done without fanfare or a large crowd, yet the significance of his action cannot be understated. The proclamation was a bold move for the time, declaring freedom for all people, as guaranteed by the Constitution and following God’s natural law.

However, as we know, while a vital step in ensuring victory, the Emancipation Proclamation did not end the conflict of the Civil War. The year 1863 brought immense heartache to thousands of families as the country continued in the bloody conflict. The poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was among those who experienced the despair of the war, and penned these words after hearing bells ring on Christmas day in 1863:

*And in despair I bowed my head,
“There is no peace on earth,” I said,
For hate is strong, and mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to men.*

However, the poem continued in the next stanza with a firm resolution of the hope God provides even in the darkest of times:

*Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
“God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The Wrong shall fail, The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men.”*

The actions of President Lincoln at the beginning of 1863, and the profound reminder from Longfellow at the end of 1863 serve as powerful instructions to us now as we engage in the battle to preserve and protect righteousness and freedom. Our efforts require an unwavering commitment to stand for what is right and true, and a daily reliance on God.

As we pause this week to celebrate Christmas and look forward to a New Year, may we be strengthened in our hearts through the hope of the Lord, and renewed in our commitment to faithfully and boldly follow His truth in standing for what is right. With God's help, may we labor in our ministries, as Lincoln stated at his second inaugural address: "With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in."

We pray you enjoy many reminders of the blessings from our good God as we reflect this Christmas season on the wonder of Christ's birth and the salvation He brings.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

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[Promise to America's Children](#)