

President's Message

What might Thomas Paine think of the world of today? I suspect most of us would agree that "the times that try men's souls" have, if anything, worsened in recent years. If Paine were alive today would he conclude we are progressing in the quest for the full enjoyment of our unalienable rights? Or, would he be chagrined by the widespread loss of individual liberty and the resurgence of intolerance?

Most of us in the United States and other politically stable countries enjoy some degree of relative security with access to much of what makes life comfortable. Although our challenges are certainly real -- some minor, some major -- what we share is a feeling of normalcy in our day-to-day activities for the most part. However, Paine would undoubtedly shake his head in wonder that after two centuries, humanity has failed to find a path to peaceful coexistence.

Each of us who has found Thomas Paine Friends and become a member share a unique bond. We have acquired from Paine a remarkable perspective on the human condition, on the causes and cures for our most serious political problems. Thus, we have embraced a responsibility to do what we can to encourage others at least to read something

of what Paine has to contribute to the grand public dialogue on contemporary issues. Some of us are in a position to do more than this -- teaching, writing or engaging in public action through the political process.

As we know, victories by peacefully working for change are few and far between, and right now it seems like the dominoes are falling in a direction Paine would find quite fearful. Perhaps these words from Paine will provide a degree of comfort as we travel through the coming year:

"The mutual dependence and reciprocal interest which man has upon man, and all parts of a civilized community upon each other, create that great chain of connection which holds it together. The landholder, the farmer, the manufacturer, the merchant, the tradesman, and every occupation, prospers by the aid which each receives from the other, and from the whole. Common interest regulates their concerns, and forms their laws; and the laws which common usage ordains, have a greater influence than the laws of government. In fine, society performs for itself almost every thing which is ascribed to government."

--Ed Dodson January 2018

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