



WISCONSIN FAMILY COUNCIL
Marriage|Family|Life|Liberty

Church Connection January 2022

Strengthening, Preserving & Promoting Marriage, Family, Life & Religious Freedom

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free....If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

Jn. 8:32,36

Not in Conflict

We recognize two important issues in January: religious freedom and life. While these two issues are commemorated separately, they certainly aren't in conflict. Rather, they are related.

Religious freedom gives us the constitutional protection for our pro-life beliefs. As Christians we base these beliefs on God's Word that clearly tells us He is the Author of life. Certainly we have science on our side when we say life begins at conception; but even if science were at odds, we'd stand firmly on what Scripture says. Religious freedom allows us to speak pro-life truth in the public arena.

Religious Freedom – More Than an Epitaph

At Monticello, Thomas Jefferson's home in Charlottesville, Virginia, there is an obelisk monument marking Jefferson's grave. Jefferson wrote his own epitaph:

*"Here was buried/Thomas Jefferson
Author of the Declaration of American
Independence/of the Statute of Virginia for
religious freedom/& Father of the Univer-
sity of Virginia."*

Jefferson said he wrote these words *"because by these as testimonials that I have lived, I wish to be most remembered."*

Sadly, many today do not know about Jefferson's work on religious freedom and therefore cannot remember him for it. In 1777, Jefferson wrote the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom. James Madison championed it in the Virginia General Assembly where it passed on January 16, 1786.

The opening words of this statute are *"Whereas, Almighty God hath created the mind free,"* making it clear what Jefferson thought about the freedom of conscience and about its Creator. The Statute also clarified that the Church of England was no longer the state church of Virginia.

Just a year later in 1787, the drafters of the US Constitution relied heavily on Jefferson's Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom as they drafted the First Amendment (part of the Bill of Rights) which protects our religious freedom in the form of an Establishment clause and a Free Exercise Clause.

National Religious Freedom Day began with Congress in 1992, issuing a joint resolution designating January 16, 1993, as Religious Freedom Day and authorizing and requesting that the President issue a Religious Freedom Day proclamation and call upon all Americans *"to join together to celebrate their religious freedom and to observe the day with appropriate ceremonies and activities."* And every year on January 16, in commemoration of the Virginia General Assembly's adoption of Jefferson's Statute of Religious Freedom, the president has issued a proclamation. We hope this year continues the practice.



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Promoting Life in WI

Are you promoting life everywhere you drive? You can--if you join the nearly 2100 other WI citizens who have purchased Choose Life WI plates!

The \$25 from the sale of each plate goes to Choose Life WI (CLW) (headquartered in our WFC office), which then disburses every penny of the money to our state's awesome pregnancy care centers (PCC). Since May 2018, CLW has awarded over \$150,000 to over 30 PCCs.

To get details, visit chooselifewisconsin.com or call 888-378-7395.

Did You Know?

Did you know that in America there is a Sunday set aside every year to recognize the importance of religious liberty? Religious Freedom Sunday is celebrated annually in January. This year it is on Religious Freedom Day, Sunday, January 16.

For details, visit www.religiousfreedomSunday.com. Wisconsin Family Council's website has additional resources: www.wifamilycouncil.org/resources/liberty.

Heritage Foundation has an excellent article: "Religious Freedom: What's At Stake If We Lose It" (see www.Heritage.org/religious-liberty).

Religious freedom in our country was highly prized from the beginning. Recall that the Pilgrims and Puritans came to the New World for freedom of conscience and religion, not for a better economy, better jobs or better crops.

One hundred and fifty years after the landing of the *Mayflower*, the founding fathers recognized religious freedom as the "first freedom" because it is so foundational to our other freedoms. Many of the founders were quite vocal about the importance of religious freedom in the newly formed country. John Adams declared, "*Let the pulpit resound with the doctrine and sentiments of religious liberty. Let us hear of the dignity of man's nature, and the noble rank he holds among the works of God....*"

James Monroe in an address to the Virginia General Assembly in 1785, said, "*We hold it for a fundamental and inalienable truth that religion and the manner of discharging it can be directed only by reason and conviction not by force and violence. The religion, then, of every man must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man; and it is the right of every man to exercise it as these may dictate.*"

In 1848 when Wisconsin's constitution was ratified, it contained significant religious freedom language which is still in effect today. In part that section reads, "*The right of every person to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of conscience shall never be infringed...nor shall any control of, or interference with, the rights of conscience be permitted....*"

Attacks on religious freedom are increasing. Too often today we are told the religious freedom our founders fought for is bigotry, hate, discrimination and intolerance. That's not true, but too often when so-called civil liberties clash with religious freedom, constitutionally protected religious freedom has lost. Religious freedom requires and deserves the very best of protection and defense—and education.

This year January 16 is a Sunday. Wouldn't it be wonderful if our churches took time to give proper recognition to this nationally recognized day, telling the truth about this vital freedom? In our families and churches we need to ensure the next generation understands what religious freedom really is. We should pray for God's help to protect that which is the undergirding to our other rights and freedoms. Like Jefferson, may we want to be remembered for defending our first freedom.

About Wisconsin Family Council

Wisconsin Family Council is a 501 (c)(3) organization that has been advancing Judeo-Christian principles and values in Wisconsin since 1986.

We have largely done this by informing Wisconsin citizens, policymakers and churches about the important legislative and cultural issues so that they can be involved in strengthening, preserving and promoting marriage, family, life and religious freedom in our state.

"Church Connection" is published monthly by WFC and is available to churches in Wisconsin.