

# Religion and Bicentennial

"Just as religion has made a major contribution to the founding and growth of this nation, the religious com-

munity is making important contributions to the observance of the nation's Bicentennial," says John W.

Warner, Administrator of the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration (ABRA).

Mr. Warner's comments refer to the deep involvement of religious organizations in projects and events relating to the commemoration of America's 200th anniversary.

The efforts range from special prayer days in local churches to two-year long national programs focusing on the role of religion in the future.

In New York, Project FORWARD '76 (Freedom of Religion Will Advance Real Democracy) is working to "facilitate planning for strong spiritual and religious emphasis in observances of the American Bicentennial, 1974-1976." The project was officially recognized as a national Bicentennial program by the ARBA on September 27, 1974.

Formed by the interchurch Center which houses offices of Protestant, Roman Catholic and Jewish organizations, Project FORWARD '76 offers research and technical help to other groups around the country interested in religious observance of the Bicentennial.

Services available include: A national information bank with plans, programs and materials; a newsletter; planning assistance by national and regional staff personnel; and scholarly research.

"Liberty and Justice for All" is the Bicentennial theme of the Catholic Church in the United States. Announced by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee for the Bicentennial, the program begins this September and will culminate in a national conference in the fall of '76, tentatively scheduled in Michigan. The central purpose of the program is to "elicit from the Catholic community an expression of the meaning of 'liberty and justice for all'."

The National Conference of Christians and Jews is putting special emphasis on "Human Relations in Century III." Along with forums conducted throughout the country on that subject, the Conference plans to issue a Declaration of Interdependence in 1976.

An Ecumenical Task Force within the National Council of Churches is issuing a series of Bicentennial oriented publications, and plans to

produce a film, "Right of the People," for use in church and religious conferences.

The United Church of Christ hopes to sponsor a "caravan" of Afro-American Art to follow the route of the underground railroad. The UCC is also involved in a program called "Child Care '76."

The Indiana Council of Churches, representing major Protestant denominations in the State, is producing a film on the religious historic sites in Indiana and will make it available to religious, school and service organizations.

An interfaith and interdisciplinary ad hoc committee of Philadelphia area historians and clergymen is working on a Bicentennial conference on religious liberty for the spring of '76. Approximately 500 participants from around the nation will discuss - religious liberty; civil, cultural and social rights; rights before the law; and economic rights.

The American Bible Society has announced a new theme---"Good News, America!"--a theme designed to relate the Scriptures to the nation's 200th anniversary. The "good news" the Society brings is that the entire Bible in the Today's English

Version will be published in 1976.

The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America has been informed by its Bicentennial Committee which recommends:

A meeting of the Clergy-Laity Congress in Philadelphia during the week of July 4, 1976; completion of the Shrine of St. Augustine, Florida, which commemorates the arrival of the first Greeks in America; and consecration in 1976 of the Cathedral of St. Sophia in Washington, D.C.


Public concerts of Jewish liturgical music, sponsored by the American Conference of Cantors-Concerts, will be held in New York, Philadelphia and Boston in 1976.

In St. Francis, South Dakota, efforts are underway to commemorate the history of the mission by honoring Christian Sioux leaders, and the founding Jesuits and Franciscan Sisters.

These are just samples of the kind and variety of religious participation in Bicentennial programs. They reflect a tribute to one of the founding documents of the nation, The Bill of Rights, which provides: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..."

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