

## Days of Yore

I'm still reading about the origin and reasons for some of our hymns. I came across one that I grew up with. I know I have always said that the first hymn I knew by heart was "Are Ye Able" but I had forgotten that one patriotic hymn was memorized by myself and by many in this country a long time ago. I remember singing it from 1<sup>st</sup> grade to 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Our day began with it. We stood up and faced the flag in our classroom and as the flag in front of the school was being raised and our right hand was placed over our hearts we sang "My Country tis of Thee." I know that has not been done in schools now for a very long time, in fact probably before my children went to school. Of course I was in elementary school during World War 2. It was a different time. A time when we actually liked, or at least tolerated our neighbors, when Sundays were the Lord's Day whether or not you went to church, when we received our news on the radio and could trust (in most cases) what we were being told. There were exceptions because we heard of "Tokyo Rose" and some traitors in our midst, those who thought the war was wrong and were against our involvement. But then came December 7<sup>th</sup>. 1941 and we were truly the United States. People pulled together and saved cans and did without and used ration stamps for just about everything. My Country Tis of Thee was written to the same musical score as "God Save the King." Although the author did not realize it at the time. It was written as a children's song and placed in children's books. The author said if he had known how popular it was going to become, he would have perfected it, and someone told him that would have ruined it. I was thinking as I read this that the 4<sup>th</sup> of July is coming soon. We will celebrate the day and remember the reason. It marks the day we became our own nation, and the Declaration of Independence was adopted. It's America's birthday. May we remember who we are and whose we are. Children of God and fortunate to live in the United States.

Lord, we thank you for our very lives and for each day we are given. May we use our days as your faithful children blessed to live in a country that is free. Be with those in our midst who are ill and those who are grieving. May we comfort them. Be with our Pastor, bless his ministry and be with him in all he does. Be with his family, bless them. Be with our staff and leaders, guide them and protect them. We thank you Lord for the safe return of those who served in the Upper Peninsula.

My Country is of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing; Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrim's pride, from every mountain side, let freedom ring. My native country thee, land of the noble free; Thy name I love. I love thy rocks and rills, thy woods and templed hills; My heart with rapture thrills like that above. Let music swell the breeze, and ring from all the trees sweet freedoms song; Let mortal tongues awake; let all that breathe partake; Let rocks their silence break, the sound prolong. Our Father God to thee, author of liberty, to thee we sing; Long may our land be bright with freedoms holy light; Protect us by thy might, Great God, our King. Amen

Grace Epperson