

Why We Celebrate Thanksgiving

In 1620, a group of people from England landed at Plymouth, Massachusetts, in late December. These people were called Pilgrims. They came seeking freedom of worship. The journey took 65 days. The journey was very difficult because of storms, illness, spoiled food, and crowded conditions on the ships. Their first winter in Massachusetts was very hard. Many died, but they refused to go back to England.

The following spring some friendly American Indians showed them how to plant corn. Their harvest was good that fall. They hunted turkey, waterfowl, and caught fish. Their Indian friends brought deer and they celebrated their first Thanksgiving.

At this Thanksgiving the Pilgrims were thankful for food, houses, wood for fuel, furs to sell to England and most of all, for their lives. They gave thanks to God because their lives were spared and they had freedom to worship him as their hearts dictated.

In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed a national day of Thanksgiving to be the last Thursday in November. In 1941 Congress decreed it to be the 4th Thursday in November.

When we celebrate Thanksgiving we give thanks for our religious freedom, homes, food, family, and our friends. We especially thank God for you, our International Friends.

by Iva Jean Carl
former Director of Friendship International