My son was six years old.

It was his first attempt at public speaking, and he had to memorize lines for the Parents’ Evening in his first-grade classroom. Over, and over again, he practiced with me, asking questions I did my best to answer, and working on pronunciation of words unfamiliar to his six years.

“We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”

My son struggled a bit with enunciating “United”, as he seemed inclined to omit the “t”. But we kept after it.

We practiced on the way to the store and before soccer practice. He practiced while I was fixing dinner and, on the way, to and from school. The weekend before the parents’ evening, he regaled the fish in the trout pond with the Preamble, while I was baiting his hook.

When I arrived at the Parents’ Evening my son was already there having been delivered by his mother. I saw him and he ran to me to give me a hug. He was so excited, and he was beaming! It was a big night.

I stood in the back of the room after greeting the other parents, doubtless grinning from ear to ear. I listened closely to the other children as they read their assigned lines. They were all so good!

Then, it was my son’s turn. He spoke in a clear voice as we had practiced, slowing his cadence slightly when he got to the word “United”, so that he got it out clearly. It was the finale of the program and it was awesome!

I know my eyes were moist as we parents, along with the kids, applauded the effort.

The words that my then six-year-old spoke resonate critically around the world yet today. And they are important here too.

Our country has just come through a particularly challenging election. Many harsh words have been cast about and terse responses have been levied. Families have been reluctant to share their thoughts with other members of their own families, concerned that anger might be the retort to such sharing.

The political winds changed and in January, a new President will be inaugurated. This President’s policies will differ from the present. Change can be difficult. However, one thing that will not change is the enduring legacy of our history and our Constitution.

One of the many things we Americans should be proud of is that in our nation, transitions of government though difficult, occur. And they occur peaceably because our founding principles, embodied in that Constitution, are so strong.

It was not always that way. In fact, at the beginning of our path to nationhood, the journey was hazardous.

“We must, indeed, all hang together or, most assuredly, we shall all hang separately,” is a quote attributed to Benjamin Franklin after he signed the Declaration of Independence in 1776.

Whether or not Franklin spoke these words, it communicates the dire peril the Revolutionaries faced that summer. The unity of Franklin and his cohorts was critical to victory in the war and without that victory, the declaration may well have been just words on paper.

Many members of that Congress were hesitant about declaring independence but, political winds had changed. So, Franklin’s assertion of unity was important and mindful too. All the members were aware they were committing treason by signing the declaration. The penalty for treason was death - by hanging.

We are, as a nation, facing change. We can as a nation flail against it and tear ourselves apart or, we can come together and put forth our best, as we Americans always do.

My son was six years old.