



Giving Thanks Amidst a Deadly *Pandemic* – This is Thanksgiving 2020

By Naomi Richard | VILLAGER Entertainment Reporter

(VILLAGER) - This year – like no other that most of us have ever known— we are being told to limit our movement and social events during one of the major holidays of the year, Thanksgiving. We are even being asked by medical experts to minimize our time around our own family members, to avoid contact and thereby prevent additional spreading of the Coronavirus. How can we possibly comply with this message from our Health Care Leadership? What will we do and where will we eat? Who's going to make the turkey and Grandma's dressing? Can we safely go visit family out of state?

Listen, we can comply – and we should comport – to keep ourselves safe and those around us. We say we love them, and this is one way to demonstrate it.

I spoke to long-time native of East Austin, Ms. **Bobbie January** about this very dilemma and to my surprise, it was already on her mind. Ms. January's family has lived in East Austin since the early 1900's and they have experienced many changes and challenges – including the 1918 flu pandemic. When asked about Thanksgiving with the COVID-19 pandemic raging in our country she said, "I'm grateful to be alive! Grateful to see my grandkids growing up. I have congestive heart failure, vertigo and high blood pressure, but I'm thankful for my medical team and my family who keeps me safe. I only go out once or twice a month!"

Since the early 1900's, when January's grandmother Mrs. Elfretter Perkins moved to Austin from Dale, Texas, they have seen tremendous changes in the 78702-zip code area. She says that the area then was a tight knit neighborhood that once was comprised of nearly all African-Americans, where there were neighbors who cared about each other and helped each other. However, now there are just three Black families on her street and most neighbors are now strangers. Many families previously lost their homes because of taxes, and some passed away, leaving their property to their heirs who sold the homesteads.

"We've lost our sense of community and supporting each other," January says while fighting back tears. "I raised my kids in this community and now I'm taking care of my grandkids. We didn't need daycare or babysitters; we took care of our own children. The elderly saw about each other. Our sense of community is gone, and people don't respect each other like they used to."

Yet as she contemplates the upcoming holidays she reflects over her past. Her grandmother and mother belonged to the **New Hope Baptist Church** under the leadership of **Rev. O.T. Arnold** and that's where she grew up. She attended the **Holy Cross**



Ms. Bobbie January

School and later joined **St. James Missionary Baptist Church** under the leadership of **Rev. B. W. McClendon, Sr.** – her favorite Pastor! She is very thankful for her church, her family and the ministries that keep her busy. She's active in Sunday School, Bible Study, Prayer Meeting and the Senior Mission #1.

"This Thanksgiving I am especially thankful. I give honor and thanks to God, number one. I thank God for allowing me to see my first granddaughter graduating from college with her Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing from **Concordia University** on December 5, number two. And number three, I'm so proud of my grandbabies who went to **St. Stephen's Episcopal School** and all are in college now except the youngest, who's a senior in high school!"

The January Family this year for Thanksgiving will forego the normal 35-40 relatives gathering to celebrate the holiday. Instead, they will have small celebrations among each one's own individual household, in order to maintain safety. All things considered, it's a small price to pay and yet, there remains so much to be thankful for.

Happy Thanksgiving to you and your families!

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Kenneth Hill, Pastor

Romans 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ

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Ebenezer Gives Free Water to Voters

(AUSTIN, TX) - The Ebenezer (Third) Baptist Church provided free bottles of water to voters on Election Day. The effort was part of the Get Out the Vote Campaign. Leaders of the church's Evangelism Ministry spearheaded the project that collected donations of bottled water from members and organizations within the church. The bottles of water were distributed at two East Austin polling locations, the Carver Library and the Millennium Youth Entertainment Complex.

"There was a steady stream of voters at the Millennium Youth Entertainment Complex. We provided several hundred bottles of water to voters. It was an honor and a blessing to be part of such a historic election," said Ruth Washington, one of the leaders of the Evangelism Ministry. The crowds at the Craver Library were smaller but voters were thankful for the chilled water as they waited in line on a sunny November day to vote. The water distribution started in the morning and went late in the afternoon. About 400 bottles of

water were handed out during entire day to voters.

Members of the Ebenezer Brotherhood, WMU and Acteens supported the process by providing labor. Each bottle of water included the Ebenezer logo and an invitation to the virtual service shown on Youtube Sunday mornings at 10:00 a.m. Since the COVID pandemic Ebenezer has moved to virtual worship services in order to protect the health and safety of the membership.

A few weeks before the pandemic surfaced in this area Ebenezer celebrated its 145th Anniversary. The church has been a vital part of the East Austin Community for over a century and was the third Baptist church in the city.

Dr. Ricky Freeman, Senior Pastor of the church and indicated virtual worship will continue until it is safe to return to the sanctuary. For more information about Ebenezer Baptist Church please email the church office ebcoffice@sbcglobo.net or call 512-478 1875.