



Focus on Religious Freedom

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Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, his love endures forever. "

1 Chronicles 16:34

Thanksgiving Thoughts: A History

1621 Grateful Pilgrims reaped a bountiful harvest the summer following the deaths of almost half their people during their first winter in New England. The 3-day feast was to thank God and to celebrate with their helpful Native friends. "By the Goodness of God we are ... far from want," wrote Pilgrim Winslow.

1777 Continental Congress, First National Proclamation of Thanks:

"... it is the Duty of all Men to adore the ... Providence of the Almighty; to acknowledge with Gratitude their Obligation to Him for Benefits received ..." Samuel Adams

1789 President George Washington proclaimed a day of Thanksgiving be held to thank God for giving the American people the opportunity to create a Constitution to preserve their hard won freedoms.

1863 During the Civil War, President Lincoln proclaimed a national day of "Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens," making Thanksgiving an official federal holiday. (wikipedia.org)

Happening Now: Restricting Religious Freedom in 2020

Churches in California and Minnesota filed lawsuits in August against governors of their states challenging the restrictions placed on gatherings of more than 10 people that they contend are violations of religious liberty. "Gov. Walz (MN), a former teacher, gets an F in religious liberties," said counsel for Thomas More Society. "Other states, including Texas, Illinois and Ohio, have excluded churches from Covid-19 mask mandates."⁽¹⁾

Religious plaintiffs have prevailed in some lawsuits. In June, a federal judge blocked New York State from enforcing restrictions on indoor religious gatherings to 25% when other types of gatherings were allowed at 50%.

In Washington D.C., the Dept. of Justice stepped in to support the Capital Hill Baptist Church who is suing the mayor over the city limiting church services to 100 people while allowing large gathering protests and rallies. "The Dept. of Justice is committed to upholding all the civil rights provided under the First Amendment, be it peaceable assembly in protest or practicing faith," said U.S.attorney for D.C. ⁽²⁾

"From the first settlers seeking freedom to practice their faith, to our founding values starting with the First Amendment ... Americans of all faiths (and no faith) have (come to expect) ever-expanding religious liberties. It's part of American exceptionalism," wrote Knox Thames in Christianity Today. ⁽³⁾

(u.s.news.com,8/13/20(1); wtop.com, 10/2/20(2); christianpost.com, 8/26/20; christianitytoday.com, 10/7/20(3)