

Singing Women provide masks for New York neighborhood

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Texas Baptist musicians who had prayed for New York City and prepared to perform concerts in churches there have spent recent weeks sewing protective masks for a congregation in Queens to distribute to its ethnically diverse neighborhood.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced the [Singing Women of Central Texas](#) to cancel a long-anticipated mission trip to New York City.

However, funds raised for that trip will benefit several churches in Metropolitan New York Baptist Association, and members of the choral group have made 500 masks for a predominantly Romanian congregation to give to residents in its neighborhood.

The Central Texas chapter of the [Singing Women of Texas](#)—a musical group sponsored by the Baptist General Convention of Texas—raised \$7,500 to fund a mission trip to New York City through offerings collected at its concerts in Texas Baptist churches from September to February.

‘Walked and prayed for New York City’

The group had expected to perform concerts in at least two churches in New York and work on mission projects in coordination with Metropolitan New York Baptist Association.

“We had a burden for New York City and for the people there,” said Kay Payton of Round Rock, director of the Singing Women of Central Texas.

In preparation for the trip, members participated in a virtual “walk to New

York”—registering miles on a digital fitness tracker and praying for specific locations in New York City as they exercised.

“All fall, we had walked and prayed for New York City,” Payton said.

When the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed in New York City, the Singing Women committed to “keep praying and keep walking,” she noted.

But even before the New York governor issued stay-at-home restrictions in late March, it became clear the mission trip and concerts had to be cancelled.

Plans changed, new opportunity emerged

At that point, Payton contacted Metropolitan New York Baptist Association to request a list of specific needs the Singing Women might be able to meet.



Members of the Singing Women of Central Texas made 500 protective masks for Maranatha Baptist Church in New York City to distribute to its neighbors. (Photo from Maranatha Baptist Church

Facebook page)

The group learned [Maranatha Baptist Church](#) serves an area in the borough of Queens, bordering Brooklyn, where more than half the residents speak a language other than English. About four out of 10 people in the neighborhood are immigrants—mostly from Romania, Albania and Poland.

“A lot of the immigrants work as taxi or Uber drivers, as hotel employees or as busboys or dishwashers in restaurants, so they are out of work,” Payton said.

Maranatha Baptist Church provides free groceries each Tuesday afternoon to local families who are unemployed or in need.

“But they can’t even go out on the streets without masks,” she added.

Payton contacted Pastor Emanuel Grozea to ask how many masks his church needed. He responded with a request for 500 masks.

“He told me he had been on the phone trying to secure masks from companies, and they were just too expensive,” Payton said. “He prayed and asked God what he should do. And then my email appeared offering masks for free.”

Making masks, funding ministries

Payton asked each of the Singing Women who were capable to sew masks. Those who lacked the skill or equipment to sew were invited to write encouraging Scripture verses on index cards or slips of paper that could be clipped to each mask.



Residents of a neighborhood around Maranatha Baptist Church in New York line up to receive free groceries from the church and protective masks made by the Singing Women of Central Texas. (Photo from the Maranatha Baptist Church Facebook page)

The first 200 masks arrived May 1 at Maranatha Baptist Church. A few days later, neighborhood residents lined up around the block—each person six feet from anyone else—to receive a sack of groceries and select masks for other members of their families.

A second shipment of 200 masks was sent about a week later, and 100 more are scheduled to be sent to New York by the end of this week.

In addition to giving away groceries to neighborhood residents, Maranatha Baptist Church also has provided meals for police officers in the 104th Precinct, as well as firefighters and paramedics serving the neighborhood.

The Singing Women of Central Texas wanted to donate to ministries in New York the funds given at its concerts in recent months. The group's officers agreed to send Maranatha Baptist Church \$1,000 to help buy groceries for neighborhood families and meals for first responders. Metropolitan New York Baptist Association will receive the remaining \$6,500 to meet other needs.

“Every church needs money to help with food, shelter and—unfortunately—funerals,” Payton wrote in an email to the Singing Women.

“We may not be the ‘hands and feet’ of Jesus on the streets of NYC, but like Lydia, Mary, Martha, Eunice and Lois, we can send funds for the ministry of those the Lord has already set in place.”