

# Kathy Hillman: With thanks and prayers

November 9, 2015

*"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you." (Philippians 1:3)*

Each Nov. 11, we pause to say thank you to all who served in the United States Armed Forces. Originally known as Armistice Day to honor the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month in 1918 when World War I's fighting ceased, the name changed to Veterans Day in 1954 to include all



T. P. Robinson Jr., Kathy Hillman's late father who served



in the U.S. Navy during World War II.veterans.

Kathy HillmanIn part, the original congressional concurrent resolution states, "Whereas it is fitting that the recurring anniversary of this date should be commemorated with thanksgiving and prayer and exercises designed to perpetuate peace ...." Thus, on this day, we express our gratitude and our

thanks to veterans in words, in deeds and in prayers.

On the fourth Thursday of November, we again will break from the busyness of life to say thank you to God for his many blessings. The Apostle Paul sets a beautiful example as he expresses thanks more than 45 times in his letters. My husband, John, and I emphasize pleases and thank-yous for snacks every Sunday with the 2-year-olds we teach. A recent Bible story stressed the importance of saying thank you all the time. Using Luke 17:11-19, we talked about Jesus healing the 10 men who had leprosy so



there were no more sores or spots.

Teaching two-year-olds to say “thank you” at snack time. (Kathy Hillman Photo) We counted our fingers to show how many came back to say thank you and how many didn’t.

That morning, for the first time, every child said, “Thank you” except our Spanish language pastor’s daughter, Elisa, who said, “*Gracias*.” Her sweet words remind me that on my first overseas trip, we learned to express thanks in five languages. No one is too young or too old, too rich or too poor, too important or too invisible to express gratitude.

Mother insisted I write thank-you notes as a child or if possible, to offer appreciation in person or with a phone call. There wasn't email. With my organizational bent, Daddy accused me of checking gift tags and writing fill-in-the-blank messages before opening my Christmas presents. I considered it but didn't do it.

I wish I had time to write individual thank-you notes to all 2 million-plus Texas Baptists or at least the 5,333 affiliated congregations for the privilege of serving as a convention officer these past three years and as president during 2015.



Kathy Hillman with the Texas Baptists sign at Rambler Park. (Kathy Hillman Photo) My list would also include Baptist Building—now Rambler Park—staff, from the security monitor who helped me avoid traffic snarls, to the ministry assistant who found me a granola bar the morning I forgot to eat breakfast, to those who patiently explained their service until I sort of understood, and to others who provided information, statistics and stories for presentations and columns. More notes should go to Baylor University colleagues and those at the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives for frequent assistance and to individuals who encouraged or provided ideas by e-mail.

For you who serve on committees, boards and task forces, on annual meeting programs and in a myriad of other, often unsung, ways, thank you for sharing your time, talents and treasures with Texas Baptists and for saying “yes” when called. I’m grateful to the *Baptist Standard*, churches, universities, seminaries and human-care institutions for opportunities to share about Texas Baptists’ current mission and ministries.



Kathy Hillman’s prayer bracelet will get a new “Texas” charm. (Kathy Hillman Photo) And I’m thankful for the convention’s faithfulness for 130 years—not quite half during my lifetime—that provided educations for my great grandmother, grandparents, parents, myself and our children and commissioned a circuit-riding missionary-preacher. He won my great-grandfather to Christ when he rode into a prayer meeting while searching for stray cattle. I’m thankful for those who nurtured me, prayed for me and chose me as a Baptist General Convention of Texas summer missionary. As a college sophomore, I heard God’s call to serve as a layperson in Texas. Thank you, especially, family, friends, church and university who have encouraged me to try to

live that deeply rooted legacy for a lifetime.

As the term ends, I'll add a new Texas charm to my prayer bracelet as a reminder to pray for the many ways Texas Baptists live the Great



Commandment and the Great Commission every day. So *gracias, merci, děkuji, danke, спасибо, arigatô, xièxiè, mulțumesc, kop khun, takk, asante, shukran, salamot po, hvala, ahmesugenalew, tñanan, terima kasi, arigatô,*

. Thank you, Texas Baptists, in these and all 69 languages in which we worship.

"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you."

*Kathy Hillman is president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas. She also is director of Baptist collections, library advancement and the Keston Center for Religion, Politics and Society at Baylor University.*