



**A Proclamation by Ellis County Judge Todd Little in Observance
of the 400th Anniversary of the First Thanksgiving**

WHEREAS, after years of religious intolerance by the Church of England, approximately 100 Puritans departed from Plymouth, England aboard the Mayflower in 1620, hoping to establish a new life in the Americas; and

WHEREAS, during their two-month journey across the Atlantic, the pilgrims endured painful hardships, including overcrowding, tumultuous ocean waves, moonless nights, freezing water seepage, and food shortages; and

WHEREAS, undeterred by these challenges, the pilgrims completed their journey to the New World, where they drafted the first American Constitution before disembarking: the Mayflower Compact; and

WHEREAS, being unaccustomed to the freezing temperatures of North America, half of all the pilgrims perished during that first winter while they worked day after day to build a suitable settlement; and

WHEREAS, through friendship and diplomacy, the colonists accepted the patronage of Wampanoag Chief Massasoit – who would eventually be honored as the namesake of the new colony – and the assistance of Squanto, the sole survivor of the lost Patuxet tribe who taught the pilgrims how to farm in this unfamiliar climate; and

WHEREAS, by the grace of God, the surviving pilgrims pulled through the next year, which they culminated in the Fall of 1621 with a large communal feast shared with their new allies, the Wampanoag; and

WHEREAS, over the next three years, the Plymouth Colony continued its tradition of celebrating each year's successful harvest with a ceremony of prayer and thankfulness for their continued blessings; and

WHEREAS, after the dissolution of their communal economic system and the establishment of private property rights, the pilgrims found renewed energy to produce and trade the fruits of their labor amongst themselves and with their indigenous neighbors, thus setting the foundations for the freedom of a new nation; and

WHEREAS, through generations of hard work, the Plymouth Colony continued to improve and expand with more inhabitants until it eventually became the colony of Massachusetts – the cradle of American liberty; and

WHEREAS, in reverence for the foundations of our great country, American presidents continued to encourage their fellow citizens to observe a day of Thanksgiving each November, and Abraham Lincoln proclaimed it a federal holiday in 1863 to unite a divided nation; and

WHEREAS, as Plymouth Colony Governor William Bradford wrote in his memoir, the purpose of Thanksgiving is "that [our] children may see what difficulties their fathers had to wrestle in accomplishing the first beginnings; and how God ultimately brought them through..."

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED that I, Ellis County Judge Todd Little, proclaim and observe Thursday, November 25th, 2021 as the 400th anniversary of the first Thanksgiving for Ellis County, Texas.

In witness thereof, signed the 22nd of November, 2021 –


Todd Little, Ellis County Judge