

From the Desk of Pastor Gary Chorpenning

June 10, 2020

Dear Venice Church family,

This note is an addendum to the letter written by the elders of Venice Church also dated June 10, 2020. That letter was written by the session based on their actions at our June 3, 2020 meeting. While I did not write that letter, I am entirely in agreement with it.

I realize that the restrictions that we are putting in place for worship at Venice Church might seem burdensome and overly cautious. But as we have said before, we would rather err on the side of being too cautious than on the side of being reckless with our people's health.

And let me give you some context for that last statement. On June 8, just as I was getting the session letter ready for mailing, I read the following post on the EPC Pastors' Facebook group. The post was written by an EPC pastor in Texas, and it refers to events at his church's in-person worship service on June 7, 2020. Here's what he wrote:

I found out earlier today that a man who attended worship, yesterday, has tested positive for Covid-19. We're busily tracking everyone with whom he came into contact and then informing them. We're socially distancing, and he wore a mask throughout the service, but there's still a risk involved. We have a security system, so we're able to see his movements. Thank goodness we have protocols in place, otherwise we would have to seriously consider shutting down and self-isolating the entire congregation. I know that people complain about the restrictions, but they are really helpful when it comes to dealing with an actual case.

A little later in the discussion, he posted this follow-up comment:

Well, before you all run away with the idea that we are hyper-efficient paragons of virtue, I need to tell you that he [the COVID-positive man] was greeted by two of our old guys in the parking lot, who promptly shook him by the hand. Aaaaaargh.

This is the sort of situation that keeps me, as your pastor, awake at night. I do not want to inconvenience you unnecessarily. But I do want to do all that we can to limit the damage if I or one of you turns up COVID-positive and very sick on a few days after we were all together on the Sunday.

Ideally, all these restrictions will be temporary. But in the meantime, let's all go out of our way to make sure that we take care of each other in these uncertain times.

Yours in Christ's love,

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