

Dallas Church Presses Into Prayer for Ebola Families

It was like any other Sunday morning worship service at Wilshire Baptist Church in Dallas, where Louise Troh, the quarantined girlfriend of the first patient in the United States diagnosed with Ebola, is a member of the congregation.

Greeters passed out bulletins and shook hands at the church entrances. Members hugged each other in greeting shortly before the service began. A couple hundred people sat in the pews of the church and began to pray for the patient, Thomas Eric Duncan, and for Troh and both of their families.

Associate Pastor Mark Wingfeld led the opening prayer and encouraged members not only to focus on the family in Dallas but also on those stricken with the deadly virus in West Africa who don't have the same access to medical care. At least 3,400 people have died in the outbreak worldwide, predominantly in West Africa.

"Although this disease has become personal to us, we realize we're not the first to know its devastation and we are not the ones most desperately affected," Wingfeld told parishioners.

"We pray that you calm the anxious hearts of so many in our city. Help the ignorant understand the truth."

Parishioners were told by church officials earlier in the week that neither Troh nor any of her family members had attended services since Duncan's arrival so there was no chance of exposure within the congregation.

Medical authorities have identified 10 people who had direct contact with Duncan as being at greatest risk of infection. Troh, whom Duncan has been staying with since he arrived on a visit from West Africa, is one of them.

“Whether there had been contact or not, maybe we would be acting differently, but I’d like to think we wouldn’t,” Julie Sorrels, 33, said.

“Before this, I was concerned about the Ebola situation in Africa. This made it more personal to have a name of someone specifically to pray for,” she said.

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