

Mike Pence Urges Americans Not to Attend Church Services of More Than 10 People

Vice President Mike Pence urged Americans to avoid church services of more than 10 people yesterday, April 1.

Pence tells *Nightline* co-anchor Byron Pitts that he, his wife and President Donald Trump have been “enjoying worship services online,” according to ABC.

“We’re so grateful to churches and synagogues and places of worship around America that have heeded the president’s coronavirus guidelines for America,” he said, referring to the federal guidelines for social distancing. “We really believe this is a time when people should avoid gatherings of more than 10 people. And we continue to urge churches around America to heed to that.”

Pence’s comments come shortly after a Florida megachurch pastor was arrested Monday for holding large church services during a stay-at-home order. Rodney Howard-Browne, pastor of The River at Tampa Bay, faces two misdemeanor charges of unlawful assembly and violation of public health emergency rules, according to the Hillsborough County Sheriff’s Office.

Howard-Browne says he was arrested for exercising his First Amendment rights and that he’s praying for Sheriff Chad Chronister, who arrested him. Liberty Counsel founder Mat Staver is representing Howard-Browne and says his church followed the Hillsborough County guidelines for social distancing during the services.

Pence, who is leading the White House’s coronavirus task force, also said his team is working closely with governors to make sure they have the resources and information they need to

make the best decisions for their states.

"We believe we're in a much better place by June the 1st," Pence said. "If every American will put these guidelines into practice, if we all continue to do our part, we really do believe that by Memorial Day weekend or by early summer ... we can be through the hardest part of this."