

# Pastor Forced to Wear Ankle Monitor After Defying Stay-at-Home Orders

Pastor Tony Spell was placed under house arrest and fitted with a tracking device after defying Louisiana orders by holding in-person church services that exceeded the number of people allowed in one setting.

As various states have issued lockdowns or guidelines during the coronavirus pandemic, numerous churches across the country have closed their doors and switched to livestream-only services.

But several pastors have refused to comply with state stay-at-home orders, even in states that say churches are not exempt. Baton Rouge's Life Tabernacle Church Pastor Tony Spell is one of them.

On Friday, April 24, District Judge Fred Crifaso asked Spell to limit the size of his church gatherings in compliance with the state's orders. According to Fox News, Spell responded by citing 1 Peter 3:14: "But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled."

Because he would not promise to comply with the order, Spell was placed under house arrest and fitted with an ankle bracelet, reports NBC News.

The following Sunday, April 26, Spell preached to a congregation of at least 80 people, who cheered as he walked in the sanctuary. Dozens held signs that said, "I Stand With Pastor Spell!" A few congregants could be seen wearing gloves, but the vast majority of those caught on video were standing close to one another and were not wearing masks.

"I'm not hiding anymore," Spell said in a livestreamed video of the service posted by Central City News. "... Tomorrow at 12 o'clock, my voice will be silenced for several months. You will not hear from me again. I promise you, I will continue to do what I do. This is not about me. This is about our religious liberties."

On Tuesday, April 21, Spell was arrested and charged with assault after he was accused of backing up his church bus too close to a protester outside his church. Spell's attorney, Joseph Long, says it was never Spell's intention to hit the protester, though.

"A fair viewing of the video will prove that Spell did not attempt to run over the protester, and the protester did not feel threatened, as he never moved when the bus came near," Long said.