

Hillsong Pastor Carl Lentz Tests Positive for COVID-19: 'Take It Seriously'

Hillsong Church NYC pastor Carl Lentz is urging people to take the coronavirus pandemic seriously after testing positive for COVID-19 himself.

Lentz confirmed his diagnosis Tuesday (March 24) to Religion News Service. He'd first announced it Monday night in an Instagram Live video that is no longer available.

The pastor told RNS he hoped by speaking out he could calm people's fears about a positive test being a death sentence, "but, at the same time, also try to get people to take it seriously."

"Because the longer people won't take it seriously, the longer this is going to go on," he said.

Lentz described his symptoms as "kind of like a flu, but heavier," with extreme body aches.

The most common symptoms of the coronavirus are cough, fever and shortness of breath, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Hillsong NYC canceled its in-person gatherings and moved its Sunday services online March 15 to encourage people to stay home and slow the spread of the coronavirus. The church had already been planning for the move as the number of cases increased in New York City, Lentz said.

Last week, the pastor said he started feeling poorly and got tested.

"Our whole team probably got hit pretty hard with it. New York

in general seems to be a little bit of an incubator,” he said.

New York has reported more than 25,600 cases of coronavirus and 210 deaths as of Tuesday afternoon, according to *The New York Times*.

Days ago, another Hillsong pastor, John Termini, posted on Instagram that he has been self-isolating since he was tested for COVID-19 and told he likely has it.

Termini posted that he believes in “prayer and the practical.”

“If we do them both, we will overcome this with certainty. This virus is not bigger than us,” he said.

Hillsong NYC is part of a global network of Hillsong churches founded by Brian and Bobbie Houston in 1983 in suburban Sydney, Australia. Hillsong has an average attendance of 150,000 people each week in 28 countries, according to its website.

Lentz also has been quarantined since he was tested, he said, taking short walks in the park near his home where he can maintain 6 feet between himself and others.

He urged people to focus on what they can control amid the pandemic, to not let fear get the best of them, to “fill your mind with as much good news as you can find and don’t let it become something that weighs your whole life down.”

“We’re all gonna get through this. We’re praying that obviously we get a solution that involves medicine, that we can eradicate this,” he said.

Lentz, one of a number of pastors *GQ* magazine has described as “hypepriests” who lead churches frequented by celebrities, is one of several prominent U.S. faith leaders who reportedly have tested positive for the coronavirus, including Roman Catholic Archbishop Gregory Aymond of New Orleans, former EWTN News President Dan Burke and Shaykh Hatem Al-Haj. {eoa}

