



A MESSAGE FROM PASTOR SCOTT

New COVID Protocols, Fall 2020

August 13, 2020

Until now, we at East White Oak Bible Church have not established any written protocol regarding COVID symptoms or such things. Circumstances have pressed us to establish such a written protocol. The elders have approved the following written expectations for our fellowship as it relates to COVID infection, symptoms, testing, etc. We like the word, “expectations,” because we are not intending to be police or enforcers or anything like that. We simply want to have everyone know that this is what is expected when we gather together, so that no one is surprised by what they encounter when they join us for worship, fellowship, and study of the Word of God.

Please know that we do not do this because we want to. We’d much prefer to have no protocol at all. Please hear our hearts on this. There are three key reasons why we need to do this.

FIRST, WE ARE DETERMINED TO HAVE ONE CHURCH, EVEN WITH DIVERSITY IN THE BODY ON THE MATTER OF CORONAVIRUS.

We do not believe that the church should be splintered into groups based on what they think about coronavirus. That is easier said than done, as people’s opinions are pretty fixed and determined. We are challenging and inviting our church family to set aside one’s preferences for the sake of ministry. Let’s all give up our preferences for the sake of our brother. If members of our body feel safer by our sacrificing our freedoms, let’s do that. Romans 14:13 must be how we live with one another in these days, “Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.” We know that there are loud voices on all sides saying how we ought to conduct ourselves. We want to be a church family willing to lay down our preferences for the blessing of others.

SECOND, WE LIVE IN A COMMUNITY CONTEXT, AND WE ARE GIVING A TESTIMONY ABOUT OUR WILLINGNESS TO LIVE IN HARMONY WITH OUR COMMUNITY BY HOW WE LIVE.

If we go against our community standards arbitrarily and/or without a biblically informed conscience, we are bearing witness, not to Christ and the Gospel, but to our determination to live our own way. Since we want our community to know that we love living among our neighbors, we will give up some patterns of living that we may have freedom of conscience to do but would bear a poor witness to Christ and the Gospel. We have studied the protocols of our local community, our local schools, our state board of education, our county and state boards of health. To this point, we do not see any reason to go against the largely consistent standards that those various groups have established. To the contrary, we see great merit in living in accordance with those standards as a means of communicating to our neighbors that we love them and stand with them in this pandemic. We are hoping that many people who are not yet believers in Christ will be coming to East White Oak in the months ahead. We do not want our behaving in a contrary manner to our community to be a stumbling block for the Gospel in their lives.

THIRD, WE ARE CONSCIOUS THAT WE LIVE IN A LITIGIOUS SOCIETY. ONE WAY TO AVOID AN ACCUSATION OF NEGLIGENCE IS BY CONFORMING WHERE APPROPRIATE TO THE COMMONLY HELD COMMUNITY STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOR.

For example, if we were to have more people in our worship center than the fire marshal says is proper, and if a fire broke out, there would be just cause for litigation based on negligence of conforming to community standards. Similarly, we do not want to be the outlier in how we conduct ourselves in this pandemic, if literally every other community organization is conducting themselves otherwise. That would leave our church open to an accusation of negligence.

The protocols below are not perfect. In fact, there is likely something here for everyone to disagree with. However, for the sake of the Gospel and the joy of meeting together and serving Jesus together, can we set aside our preferences and live this out? When Naaman was told to dip seven times in the Jordan River, he balked and complained, “Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?” But his servants said to him, “My father, it is a great word the prophet has spoken to you; will you not do it?” The point is that we know that we are asking things that deliberately inconvenience and bother people. But, for the sake of being able to have church, serve the Lord together, and avoid the pain of online only gathering, we humbly ask for your cooperation.

— Pastor Scott