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BREAKING | 19,770 views | May 23, 2020, 06:58pm EDT

Church-Related Coronavirus Outbreaks Reported As Trump Pushes For Reopening

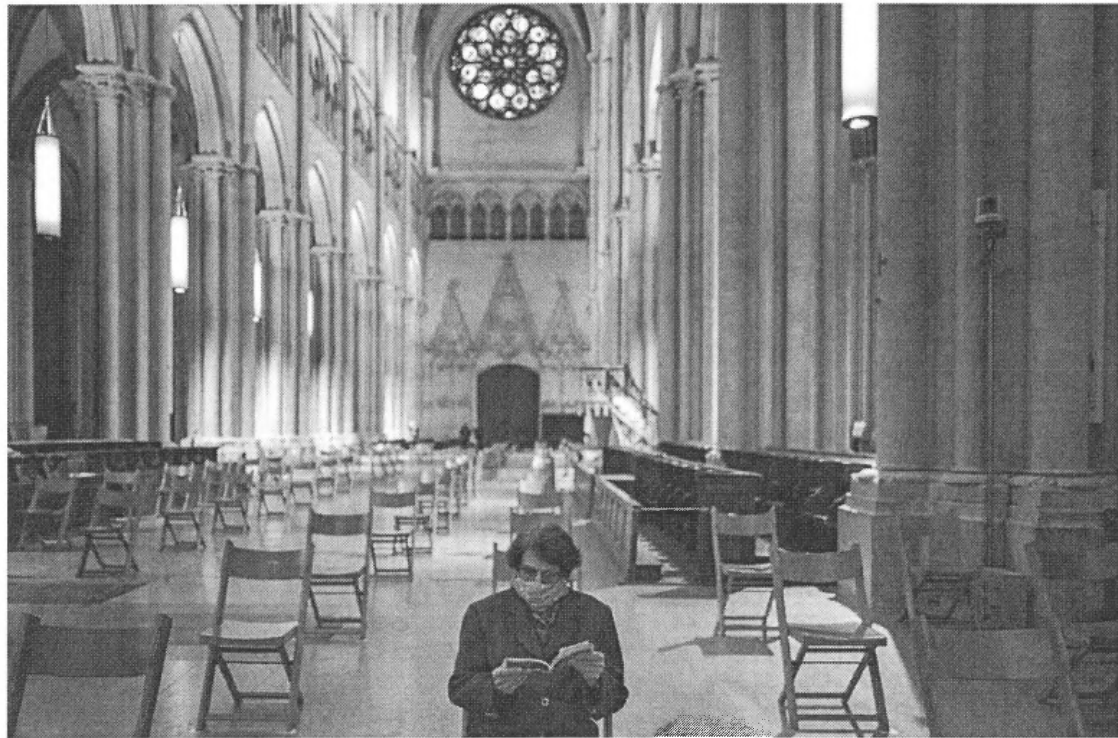


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I cover breaking news.

TOPLINE As President Donald Trump sides with churches that want to reopen faster than their state's safety guidelines will allow, new Covid-19 virus outbreaks associated with in-person religious services are being reported worldwide.



Churches across the world have been linked to Covid-19 clusters. AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

KEY FACTS

- Trump demanded Friday that states allow places of worship to reopen and even threatened to order them open himself if governors won't, though he doesn't have the authority under federal law.
- However, in-person religious services have been linked to a number of new Covid-19 outbreaks in recent weeks around the world, including cases that proved fatal.
- More than 40 people who attended a church service in Frankfurt, Germany several weeks ago have since tested positive for Covid-19, local officials said Saturday.
- A church in rural Arkansas has been connected to a Covid-19 cluster by the Centers For Disease Control, who reported this week that 35 people, or nearly 40% of attendees over about a week in early March, tested positive for Covid-19, with three dying from the virus.
- A church in Texas closed for the second time last week when a priest died from the virus less than two weeks after masses resumed as the state eased back its Covid-19 crackdown.
- A Virginia pastor who held church services throughout March against the advice of health officials—and told congregants he would continue “unless I’m in jail or the hospital”—died from Covid-19 in April.

KEY BACKGROUND

Churches are the latest battleground for the push and pull between proponents of continuing social distancing to curb Covid-19 and

those in support of reopening society. Trump said reopening churches would help “normalize” life in the U.S. on Thursday, adding that “the churches are not being treated with respect by a lot of the Democrat governors.” Florida megachurch leader Rodney Howard-Browne was arrested in March for continuing to hold church services in violation of a countywide order.

FURTHER READING

More than 40 diagnosed with COVID-19 after Frankfurt church service (Reuters)

Trump Demands States Reopen Houses Of Worship, Claims Will Override Governors If They Don't (*Forbes*)

1,200 California Pastors Plan To Defy Stay-At-Home Orders To Hold Services (*Forbes*)

CDC Finds Coronavirus Outbreak Linked To Arkansas Church Amid Ongoing Concerns Over Religious Gatherings (*Forbes*)

Full coverage and live updates on the Coronavirus

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Carlie Porterfield

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