

'It ain't real': Local pastor's COVID-19 sermons raising eyebrows



<https://www.wsoc.tv/news/local/local-pastor-wants-churches-reopen-calls-covid-19-response-delusion/FWPYITM6IRD5JC2QLDJBKD32OI/>

Local pastor wants churches to reopen; calls COVID-19 response a 'delusion'

By: [Dave Faherty, wsoc.tv.com](https://www.wsoc.tv/news/local/local-pastor-wants-churches-reopen-calls-covid-19-response-delusion/FWPYITM6IRD5JC2QLDJBKD32OI/)

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HICKORY, N.C. — A local pastor is raising eyebrows with his sermons amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, Pastor Gene Gouge at Liberty Baptist in Hickory has been broadcasting his message of concern across the foothills -- and he isn't mincing his words.

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“The news media is pure evil, communist propaganda,” Gouge said.

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Not only has he attacked coverage of the pandemic but also whether or not the virus is truly a threat to the country.

“95% of everything that has gone on about the last month or two months is a mirage. It is an illusion, a delusion. It ain’t real,” he said.

Gouge believes the response to the pandemic is violating his congregation’s civil rights, so he put a sign outside his church asking the governor to stop the persecution of churches and Christians and to open the churches.

He believes people should be allowed to gather at places of worship.

“We believe this virus has been weaponized and has been used to hurt our country and hurt our constitution,” he said.

Gouge wants the governor to open up the state and local churches. He believes the best way to beat the virus is to develop our own immunity.

When Channel 9 asked him about the more than 50,000 deaths nationwide so far, the pastor responded, “You’re not going to develop

an immune system by staying in the house and by wearing gloves and wearing a mask. People who are susceptible, cancer patients, elderly people no doubt should be extra precautions.”

People who saw the sign outside the church Wednesday don't agree with its message.

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“The stuff that's in place now, it's for the protection for everybody with COVID-19 and you don't have to be in a church to love God and worship the Lord,” neighbor Brenda Waller said.

Gouge said he is praying for the governor and President Trump to reopen the states and churches. He said the church is following social distancing guidelines and broadcasting services with only 10 people inside.

Gouge isn't the first local pastor making similar statements.

Pastor Brian Carn at Kingdom City Church in southwest Charlotte held services after the stay-at-home order was first put in place. After several services, police talked to Carn and say he agreed not to hold church again until the stay-at-home order is lifted.