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## Alabama pastor, members self-quarantined in U.S. after Israel ordeal

by Diana Chandler, posted Thursday, March 12, 2020 (one month ago)

FAIRHOPE, Ala. (BP) -- An Alabama pastor and 12 church members who tested negative for the coronavirus (COVID-19) while quarantined in Israel are now safely in the U.S. under self-quarantine, the pastor told Baptist Press Thursday (March 12).



Alabama pastor Chris Bell is back home under quarantine after returning from a trip to Israel with a group from his church.

Submitted photo

Pastor Chris Bell of 3Circle Church based in Fairhope, along with a team of church leaders and their wives, are spread among four separate quarantine locations, Bell said, and will follow Centers for Disease Control and Prevention quarantine guidelines for COVID-19, short for coronavirus disease 2019.

"The thing I want folks to know is we are fully completing a CDC guideline-compliant, medically overseen quarantine," Bell told BP. "We think we need to do it, just to be safe. We don't know for sure that we were exposed, but we were potentially exposed."

One couple returned to their personal residence and have voluntarily placed under quarantine their children, Bell said, but others have not seen their children since traveling to the Holy Land March 2.

"We went straight from the airport to quarantine," Bell said. "It's not just about us; it's about protecting other people and making sure that we do this right and responsibly."

Meals are being delivered to the travelers, and a medical doctor is supervising the quarantine, Bell said. The group will complete the CDC's recommended 14-day quarantine, counted from the last date of exposure to the coronavirus.

Bell pastors the multisite 3Circle Church with campuses in Fairhope, Mobile and Daphne, and church leaders who didn't travel to Israel are conducting services and programs.

"One thing our church is really serious about is raising up and developing leaders," Bell said. "The church is going on and doing a great job because we have multiple communicators, not just me, that we've developed that can stand in the pulpit. We've got multiple leaders who stand up and do a great job. And I'm so proud of our team at 3Circle for leading well in this time."

Bell shared his ordeal in a March 11 Facebook post.

He and others had been quarantined since March 5 in their rooms at the Angel Hotel in Beit Jala after a hotel resident tested positive for COVID-19. The 3Circle Church team tested negative for COVID-19 and were cleared March 9 to return home.

"By God's grace and a miracle, we were able to get out of there before they shut everything down," Bell said.

The World Health Organization qualifies COVID-19 as a pandemic. Spreading rapidly, COVID-19 has killed more than 4,700 globally, including 38 in the U.S., and has sickened nearly 128,000, according to a tracking site maintained by Johns Hopkins University. More than 68,000 people have recovered from the virus globally, according to the site.

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Diana Chandler is Baptist Press' general assignment writer/editor. BP reports on missions, ministry and witness advanced through the Cooperative Program and on news related to Southern Baptists'... [Expand Bio]

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