

**Dr. Greg Byrd in an e-mail on May 23rd, 2020. Used with his permission**

I think I would insist on masks. Please let me explain. I realize that for some this is a very emotional issue, and there is much misinformation about masks circulating on social media. However, they are recommended by every medical organization (CDC, Mayo Clinic, Mass. General, John's Hopkins, UVA) as well as the Surgeon General. I also see it as fulfilling the Christian mandate of caring for the least of these. In my opinion, the most frightening aspect to the COVID virus is the fact that anywhere from 25-50% of people who contract the virus have no symptoms whatsoever. What this means is that there are people in our community who feel fine but are walking around interacting with others and spreading the virus. Perhaps the individual who contracts the virus from them also has no symptoms, but what if that individual works at a nursing home or cares for an elderly parent. In our region, we have experienced outbreaks at 4 adult care facilities. At three of them, the infection swept through the facility and many died. One facility appears to have dodged a bullet, and only one resident was infected. However, at all 4 facilities all the staff were tested and in each one there were several staff who were totally asymptomatic. This is the biggest (but not the only) distinction between this virus and influenza. In influenza, one might be spreading the virus asymptotically for a day or so, but then they develop symptoms and self-quarantine (because they feel horrible!).