

First U.S. Ebola case hits home for Dallas Baptist church

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Dallas Ebola patient Thomas Eric Duncan was traveling to America to get married and start a new life with a woman baptized this summer as a member of [Wilshire Baptist Church](#), Pastor George Mason wrote in an email to church members.

George Mason “I’m writing today to let you know that, sadly, there is a Wilshire connection to the Dallas Ebola case,” Mason said. “One of our own members and her family need our intensive prayer, as the patient identified in the first case of Ebola in the United States is a relative of theirs.”

Louise Troh, a native of Liberia confined in isolation with other family members because of possible exposure to the disease, was baptized as a member of Wilshire June 29. She joined and was warmly received by the [Open Bible Class](#), a large group of senior adults 60 and older.

“I have spoken with Louise by phone this morning and learned that Thomas Eric Duncan, who currently is hospitalized in isolation at Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital, came to Dallas to marry Louise and start a new life in America,” Mason said.

Mason asked church members to pray both for Duncan and for Troh and members of her extended family in isolation under direction of the Centers for Disease Control until any threat of infection with Ebola has passed.

A call to pray for healing

“You can imagine how frightening this must be for all of them, mixed with the sadness of Mr. Duncan’s diagnosis,” Mason said. “Please join me in

praying for God's mercy and peace to fall upon each of them and for God's healing."

✘ Thomas Eric Duncan is now listed in critical condition at Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital in Dallas. (Photo: Family's Facebook page) There is no reason to believe anyone else at Wilshire was exposed to Ebola, Mason stressed. None of Duncan's family and friends has attended Wilshire since his arrival in the United States on Sept. 20, he noted. Unlike many other viruses, Ebola is not communicable until symptoms are present and is spread only through direct contact with blood or body fluids.

Members of the Open Bible Class "are doing everything they can to find appropriate ways to be supportive, but there are obvious limits due to the quarantine," Mason said.

Officials in Liberia said if Duncan survives, they plan to prosecute him for answering "no" on a questionnaire if he had contacted anyone infected after helping a woman who later died from Ebola, although it is unclear he knew what she had. The Associated Press quoted local sources who said at the time the woman's illness was believed to be pregnancy related.

Hospital criticized for handling of case

Texas Health Presbyterian Hospital in Dallas drew criticism after sending Duncan home when he first showed up in the emergency room on Sept. 25. Officials said Duncan told staff he had recently been to Africa, but the information didn't show up in doctors' records because of an error in electronic record keeping.

Officials say Duncan may have had contact with as many as 100 people before he returned to the same hospital Sept. 28 and was admitted in isolation as a potential Ebola patient.

Duncan's is the first case of Ebola diagnosed in the United States, but a

patient with Ebola-like symptoms was admitted to Howard University Hospital in Washington as a precaution.

Ashoka Mukpo, a freelance journalist, tested positive for Ebola in Monrovia, Liberia, making him the fourth American to contract Ebola since the outbreak began in West Africa this spring.

The other three—missionary nurse Nancy Writebol, physician Kent Brantly of Samaritan's Purse and Massachusetts physician Richard Sacra—all returned to the United States, where they were treated and later released.