



## City of Leavenworth

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May 4, 2020

Community Members,

Things just keep getting stranger and stranger. We have the juxtaposition of the Governor's extension of the "Stay Home, Stay Healthy" order with the greatly increased traffic in and through our town and the increasingly defiant protests. I get it. We are all sick of this! We are ready for some normalcy! We want to begin to open up. But from where I see it, too many of us "want our cake, and eat it to" (apologies to anyone under fifty who won't get that reference). We want our "rights" to do and be what and where we want to do and be. But what we aren't near as good at, is taking the responsibility that go along with those "rights". Few rights are absolute. We are free, but freedom is not the same as license. The way I was raised, the greater the freedom, the greater the responsibility. We are not just a bunch of individuals with our absolute rights. We are a collection of individuals with collective rights and responsibilities.

So, here is my daily rant. As a person of faith, who believes deeply that my faith should inform my thinking and my doing, my words and my deeds, it really frosts me to see people hiding behind their faith in flaunting their refusal to abide by any "Stay Home, Stay Healthy" orders. I see people with signs that say "God is my vaccine" or any number of such things. I don't have a problem with people believing that God is their vaccine. It's just that this isn't just about them. The God I follow is also about putting the needs and concerns of one's neighbors above your own. So even if God is my vaccine, I will practice social distancing and wear a face mask when in public spaces because I value my neighbor and that comes ahead of my "right" to my independence and freedom! I get pretty frustrated with people who use their religion to justify their selfishness. Here is the truth I believe. I have absolute freedom as well. And the greatest freedom is to willingly choose to exercise that freedom in my willful care and concern for my neighbor.

Please, dear community members. You want this to open up, to begin to end. Then I ask you to demonstrate that. There are still way too many of us venturing out and about in grocery stores or other open stores without masks on. Last week I wrote about why masks are so important in this battle. It is because we don't know who has it. So, we should act as if everyone has the disease. But that is only one part of the story. The real truth we need to operate with is not just that everyone could have it, but that WE could have it! So, we have to protect others from us because we might be spreading it without knowing. Would you really like to be that person who would do such a thing? You don't wear a mask to protect yourself from others – you wear it because they might need to be protected from you. You might be brave and feel you don't need a mask and you will take your chances. But if you knew without a doubt that you were carrying the virus, would you really want to be the one to spread it to others? So, when I said last week that the key to moving forward was to assume everyone was a carrier of COVID, what I really should have said was, the real key is for you to think that you are the one carrying COVID. Every one of us should think of ourselves in that light. Then maybe we would be more willing to not infect others. "But," you say, "there is no way I am carrying the virus and could spread it to others." Really? On what basis do you say that? You simply cannot know that, none of us can. So, for the love of others, wear a mask, please! That will get us to the place of opening up more quickly than anything else... Stay safe, and keep your neighbor safe as well!



**Carl J. Florea, Mayor**

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