

Are you ready?

www.crwrc.org/pandemic



Getting Started

Conversation starters: questions for church councils and deacons

- Do we know who our healthcare professional and spiritual care congregants are?
- Do we know who in our Regional Health Authority to contact regarding their emergency plan?
- Who in our congregation relates to other neighbourhood churches/faith groups? What are these groups, interfaiths, ministerial, community resource centres?
- In what ways could a pandemic impact our congregation?
- How do we mobilize existing Care Groups or other groups instead of creating new caring structures?
- Do we know who our own typically vulnerable congregants are, where they live? Do we have current contact lists, and a way of keeping them current? Contact List
- Who outside our congregation depends on us for services, programs, other resources or support? How will we stay supportive?
- Who are our neighbours – those near our church (church neighbourhood neighbours), those in our own residential neighbourhood? Both?
- How do we intentionally get to know our vulnerable neighbours? Before an emergency event? • Which congregants are available as back-up for pastors, custodian and administrative assistant in the event some of them are ill in a pandemic? How do we help take care of them and their families/children during such a time of stress to church leadership?
- Will we close our doors until a pandemic is over?
- Will we continue to do only spiritual ministry and curtail other church and community programs? Will we do only humanitarian things? Or combine them?
- Will we reach out broadly, or will we minister only to our own people?
- Will we work by ourselves, with sister churches or with the community?
- What different methods are available to communicate with congregants and with neighbours, reliably, accurately and in a timely way, when normal communication is curtailed?

Faith Based Check-List for Pandemic Preparedness

<http://www.flu.gov/professional/community/faithcomchecklist.html>

The collaboration of Faith-Based and Community Organizations with public health agencies will be essential in protecting the public's health and safety if and when an influenza pandemic occurs. This checklist provides guidance for religious organizations (churches, synagogues, mosques, temples, etc.), social service agencies that are faith-based, and community organizations in developing and improving influenza pandemic response and preparedness plans.

Guide to Influenza Pandemic Preparedness

<http://www.library.omb.ca/dbtw-wpd/documents/FaithGroupPlanningTemplateMay2006.pdf>

The Ontario government has prepared a *Guide to Influenza Pandemic Preparedness for Faith Groups* which is intended to support the influenza pandemic preparedness efforts of faith groups and faith-based service providers.

Practical Measures

Hygiene Practices

- Prevent the spread of germs and protect the vulnerable members of the congregation, especially pregnant women and those with underlying chronic medical conditions, by encouraging the sick to stay home until they have been without fever for twenty-four hours.
- Practice cough and sneeze etiquette. Cover nose and mouth with a facial tissue; cough and sneeze into sleeve; make available boxes of facial tissues on tables, in classrooms, and at Coffee Hour.
- Throw the facial tissue into a waste receptacle after you use it; ensure that waste receptacles are located throughout the building; empty waste receptacles frequently.
- Wash hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Use soap and water for 15 to 20 seconds to wash hands or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Worship Practices

- Follow public health advice on cancellations of public gatherings and avoiding crowds to evaluate whether to cancel worship services.
- Pass the Peace with a simple nod of acknowledgement. Make and maintain eye contact while speaking the words, "the peace of Christ," without the social ritual of a handshake.
- Suspend use of the common cup and the practice of "intinction" when celebrating communion. Use plastic disposable communion cups or wash glass cups in very hot water over 110-115 degrees with detergent.
- Encourage celebrants to use hand sanitizers before serving communion.
- Wash hands before anointing with oil or the laying on of hands and repeat the practice after the rite is completed.

Visitation Practices

- Check on vulnerable individuals within the community, especially the elderly, infirmed, shut-in, physically and mentally disabled, and those who live alone.
- Follow all hospital infection control protocols. Do not visit hospitals or personal care homes if experiencing symptoms of influenza.

Church Continuity & Spiritual Care

Influenza could significantly affect the operation of the church, and the spiritual care and ministries provided. It is vital that the leadership of the denomination and the leadership of each congregation establish an influenza plan to (a) alleviate fear and panic that will occur (b) ensure continuance of spiritual care of congregants (c) ensure continuance of programs and ministries (d) ensure a cash flow for staff, programs, and ministries.

WORSHIP RESOURCES

Although many of these resources were initially created for an immediate response to natural disasters, specifically Hurricane Katrina and the 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia, they may also be amended slightly or may help provide ideas for similar resources for other natural disasters or for services remembering these events.

- *Calvin Institute of Christian Worship*

<http://www.calvin.edu/worship/services/occasion/tsunami/index.php>

- *Presbyterian Disaster Assistance*

<http://www.pcusa.org/pda/tools/resources-worshipresources.htm>

- *The United Methodist Committee on Relief*

<http://new.gbqm-umc.org/umcor/give/oghs/worship/>