



ARE YOU READY FOR A HEALTH EMERGENCY? Congregational Ministry Guidelines for Worship

Health Emergency in the Faith Community

- With the widespread talk of avian flu and a possible pandemic outbreak becoming part of the daily news, taking the time to consider how you would see the day to day needs of your community is just good planning.
- During times of crisis, the faith community is where many turn for support, particularly during a widespread health crisis. How do we continue to offer our ministry, both on Sunday mornings and throughout the week, without putting our ministry personnel, lay leaders and participants at increased risk?
- Here are some tips to consider in planning with your congregation.

Why This Topic at This Time?

Influenza pandemics occurred in 1918, 1957 and 1968. While we don't know when a pandemic may hit, we do know we need to be prepared.

What Can My Congregation Do?

- Establish an Emergency Planning Team or similar group to develop an Emergency Plan for the congregation. Think in terms of the broader context of an emergency – not just an epidemic. Aspects of the plan may be useful when you need to do a major phoning project.
- Delegate responsibility. One person cannot do it all and may not be available at the time of the emergency.
- Identify coordinators to be responsible for implementing the plan should the need arise.
- Communicate your plan to everyone in the congregation

- Review current activities and identify risks
- Develop alternatives for practices that pose a health risk
- Establish a fan-out communication list:
 1. Make a list of current members with phone numbers, cell phone and e mail addresses
 2. Establish contact groups – try for 8 to 10 per list
 3. Test for accuracy and completeness
 4. Keep the list current by using it for other communication purposes
- Practice your plan

Congregational Risks

Respiratory infections are generally passed through direct contact or airborne droplets spread from coughing and sneezing. Some common practices make transmitting infections easier:

- shaking hands with greeters, and after a service
- passing the peace
- receiving communion
- nursery and toddler room toys
- Sunday School rooms
- coffee hour and other social times
- visitation to hospitals, retirement homes, nursing homes and shut-ins

Managing the Risk

How can we reduce the “risk” without sacrificing what we know as community?

- Have alcohol-based sanitizer available for use by greeters, the clergy, worship assistants and members of the congregation.
- An alternative for passing the peace may be to bow with hands together.
- When instructed by the Bishop to do so, stop using the chalice until the health emergency is over

Sunday School

- Stock Sunday School rooms with a box of tissues and a wastepaper basket with a lid; clean tables after each class using soap and water
- Sanitize toys each week. Your local health office can provide tips on this or put the toys through a dishwasher cycle. (further information to follow)

Food-related activities

- Wash hands before handling food
- Practice good food-handling techniques
- Use a dishwasher or hot, soapy water and hot-water rinsing to clean communion vessels, coffee mugs, etc.

Alternatives to visitation when this becomes necessary

- Abide by restrictions put in place for hospitals and nursing homes
- Establish a pastoral visitation team or increase the size of your existing team now.
- Provide pastoral visitation training
- Assign families to a visitation/contact list by phone and e mail
- Develop a protocol for visitation by phone

Hand Washing Steps

- Turn on taps with warm water
- Hold hands down, fingertips at the lowest level
- Rinse hands

- Dispense soap into palm of hand
- Lather hands for at least 20 seconds
- Circle fingertips in the palm of each hand to clean well under the nails
- Rinse hands from wrists to fingertips
- Obtain paper towels
- Dry hands
- Use paper towel to turn taps off
- Discard paper towel in wastebasket

Hand Sanitizing Steps (when soap and water is not available)

- Hands should be free of any visible debris
- Apply sufficient amounts of sanitizer to the palms of both hands, enough to thoroughly cover hands
- Circle fingertips in the palm of the opposite hand and alternate
- Rub hands together covering the entire surface of the hands until the hands are dry **Hand sanitizers should contain at least 60% alcohol*

PREVENTION – THE FIRST LINE OF DEFENCE

Stay well:

- Drink adequate water/fluids
- Exercise regularly
- Eat a healthy diet
- Decrease stress
- Get enough rest
- Get the annual flu shot

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

The Diocese has established a Pandemic/Emergency Response Task Force and will be distributing information in the areas of administration, finance, pastoral care, health and liturgy. The diocesan web site: www.niagara.anglican.ca has numerous resources including websites for local Public Health Units.

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