



The People of the United Methodist Church



Pandemic Procedures for Local Churches



Disaster Response Ministry

California-Nevada Conference

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United Methodist Church

PANDEMIC PROCEDURES FOR LOCAL CHURCHES

These procedures are written during what the World Health Organization believes is an impending pandemic of the H1N1 influenza virus. The A/H1N1 strain of influenza, a virus infection also called swine flu, can cause a wide range of symptoms, including fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting associated with the H1N1 flu. People with H1N1 flu also can have vomiting and diarrhea. Like the more common seasonal flu, H1N1 flu in humans can vary in severity from mild to severe. Severe disease with pneumonia, respiratory failure and even death is possible with H1N1 flu infection. Certain groups might be more likely to develop a severe illness from H1N1 flu infection, such as persons with chronic medical conditions. Sometimes bacterial infections may occur at the same time as or after infection with influenza viruses and lead to pneumonias, ear infections, or sinus infections.

The following information can help you provide safer care of your church staff and the congregation during a flu pandemic.

Two-phase Approach:

Establish a two-phase approach in which the first phase is preparatory, establishing precautionary procedures while the second phase implements severe disease prevention measures such as closing all child-care centers and discontinuing worship services and other mass gatherings such as memorial services, weddings, routine church committee meetings, etc, while assisting members of your congregation meet their daily needs when businesses, organizations and transportation are shut down.

PHASE ONE: PRECAUTIONARY PROCEDURES

Churches:

- Provide sanitary hand cleaner for ushers, greeters, teachers, money handlers, etc. Don't overlook the staff that meets the public in the church office.
- Provide disinfectant wipes such as "Clorox wipes" for each classroom and meeting room.
- Provide latex or vinyl gloves for cleaning up after worship services.
- Purchase sanitary hand cleaners and disinfectant wipes by the case prior to implementing pandemic precautions. Expect stores to run out of all such items during the warning phase.

Pastors:

- At the beginning of each service, acknowledge the health situation and give a short overview of the health of the congregation. Announce some of the precautions being taken to inform the congregation that the situation is being taken seriously, to explain why ushers and greeters aren't shaking hands and hugging, and when mentioning the precautions being taken in classrooms, ask that if parents or their children don't feel well or are suspected of showing symptoms, to please stay at home until they are better.
- During communion, before giving the elements to the communion stewards (or yourself)

and with a hymn softly playing in the background, line up the stewards (or yourself) and apply hand sanitizer in full view of the congregation. Place wafers or bread into the hands of the people, not their mouths. Do not allow them to put their hands into a plate of bread strips or to pull out their own piece of bread from a loaf. Do not use a communal communion cup.

Ushers & Greeters:

- Discontinue shaking or holding hands.
- Wash and/or sanitize hands after taking offering.
- Folks processing money and pledge envelopes from the offering should sanitize their hands afterwards.

Clean-up after services:

- Immediately after each service clean up all waste paper and particularly used tissues. Do not allow them to accumulate in a waste basket from one service to another, emptying the contents of each basket into the central garbage receptacle. Wear latex or vinyl gloves while picking up.
- Use a disinfectant wipe on all door knobs, panic bars, faucets, etc.

Sunday school Teachers:

- Use a disinfectant wipe to wipe down all table surfaces, door knobs, et cetera, prior to the start of class.
- Visually scan each child in your class and if any are showing symptoms of an illness, have them returned to their parents with an explanation. You are not be expected to diagnose illnesses, such as telling the difference between a cold and the flu, but during this time, if a child is showing any symptoms of an illness your primary responsibility is to protect the health of the other children.
- Take a minute before class to mention the health situation in a manner appropriate to their age level, and emphasize the impact each of them can have on the situation here and at home simply by covering a cough and washing their hands properly and often. Use a handout as an illustration or have a short presentation showing how to properly wash hands.
- After the class is finished, again use a disinfectant wipe to wipe down all table surfaces, door knobs, et cetera. Tissues and other such waste should be disposed of right away, not left for whenever the janitor comes in.



PHASE TWO: SEVERE PANDEMIC PROCEDURES

Congregational Care:

- While the church is allowed to continue worship services and other group gatherings, strengthen the cleaning and disinfecting of touchable surfaces.
- Consider the voluntary temporary halting of non-essential group gatherings such as committee and commission meetings, Bible study, small-group classes, etc.
- Establish flexible work schedules. Develop ways to maximize church staff working at home and communicating through the telephone or the internet.
- Prepare for the order to close day-care centers, schools, businesses, public transportation, and the halting of worship services and gatherings such as weddings, and memorial services.
- Consider focusing the church's efforts during a severe pandemic to providing services that are most needed during the emergency.

◇ Mental/Spiritual Health:

- Make maximum use of telephone trees and the church web site to reach out to the congregation and help them feel that they are still part of the whole, even though they may be physically isolated.
- Remind them that God is with them, even in isolation.

◇ Social Services:

- Develop the means to assist elderly and special-needs people who depend on public transportation, businesses and other institutional entities, such as "Meals on Wheels," that might be closed down. Also plan for many medical clinics and other providers of routine health services which the elderly or special-needs folks have come to depend on, may be diverted to handle only flu cases.



H1N1 Flu Information Resources

Go to the Church World Service site for links to these resources:

http://www.churchworldservice.org/site/PageServer?pagename=action_what_emerg_resources_swineflu

Updated May 1, 2009

The resources here are relevant to the latest strain of influenza, type A H1N1 virus, commonly known as Swine Flu. Church World Service staff continue to monitor the spread of H1N1 Flu. CWS Emergency Response personnel are engaged in regular briefings by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the event the disaster response community would need to become further involved. CWS is providing denominational and faith-based partners with these resources on how to prevent the spread of the infection and what congregations can do in their communities should an outbreak occur.

[Pandemic Flu Preparedness for Congregations](#)

Note: The PDF refers to avian flu; however, similar principles apply to the current H1N1 Flu situation.

From Presbyterian Disaster Assistance:

[Guidance for Congregations in response to H1N1 virus](#)

[Preparation and serving of Communion during the H1N1 flu pandemic](#)

CDC Quick Reference Guide for Public Information on Infection Control

[*General Swine Flu Information *](#)

[Swine Flu Key Facts](#): Provides facts about Swine Influenza.

[Swine Flu and You](#): Provides answers to questions about Swine Influenza.

[Swine Flu Video Podcast](#): In this video, Dr. Joe Bresee, with the CDC Influenza Division, describes swine flu--its signs and symptoms, how it's transmitted, medicines to treat it, steps people can take to protect themselves from it, and what people should do if they become ill.

[All you have to do is wash your hands - Podcast](#): Teaches children how and when to wash their hands properly.

[Swine Flu RSS feed](#): Receive automatic updates on Swine Flu from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention right on your desktop or browser.

[INFLUENZA: Pigs, People and Public Health](#): Public Health Fact Sheet from National Pork Board.

*** Flu Information for Children/Parents & Child Care Providers***

[The Flu: A Guide for Parents](#): Questions and answers about the flu, how to protect your child, treatment, and more.

[Preventing the Spread of Influenza \(the Flu\) in Child Care Settings: Guidance for Administrators, Care Providers, and Other Staff](#): Flu recommendations for schools and child care providers.

[Protecting Against the Flu: Advice for Caregivers of Children Less Than 6 Months Old:](#)

Research has shown that children less than 5 years of age are at high risk of serious flu-related complications .

[Stopping Germs at Home, Work and School:](#) Fact Sheet.

[Ounce of Prevention:](#) Tips and streaming video for parents and children about the steps and benefits of effective hand washing.

[CDC Free Flu Materials:](#) This year's seasonal flu materials are free for download. They may be printed on a standard office printer, or you may use a commercial printer. Emphasis remains on outreach to high-risk groups, as well as parents of all children, health care workers, and people in the workplace.

Prevention Methods

[Clean Hands Saves lives:](#) Keeping hands clean is one of the most important steps we can take to avoid getting sick and spreading germs to others.

[Hand Hygiene in Healthcare Setting :](#) Guideline for Hand Hygiene in Healthcare Settings - 2002.

[Hand washing to reduce Disease:](#) Recommendations to Reduce Disease Transmission from Animals in Public Settings.

[BAM! Body and Mind. Teacher's Corner.:](#) In this learning activity, students will conduct an experiment on washing their hands. They will learn that "clean" hands may not be so clean after all and the critical importance of washing their hands as a way to prevent the spread of disease.

[CDC TV - Put Your Hands Together:](#) (Video) Scientists estimate that people are not washing their hands often or well enough and may transmit up to 80% of all infections by their hands.

[Cover your Cough Posters:](#) Stop the Spread of Germs that Make You and Others Sick! ... Printable formats of " Cover Your Cough". Posters only available as PDF files.

[CDC flu information:](#) Stopping Germs at Home, Work and School. Cover your cough or sneeze if you do not have a tissue. Then, clean your hands, and do so every time you cough or sneeze.

[Questions and Answers: Information for Schools:](#) Information about preventing the spread of flu in schools.

[Information for Schools & Childcare...](#) Cover Your Cough Materials. View larger image. See the Cover Your Cough page on this site for poster and flyer formatted for use in schools.

[Stopping the Spread of Germs:](#) Stop the Spread of Germs Healthy habits at home, work, & school; Printable Materials, flyers & posters, Cover Your Cough, Germ Stopper Poster.

[CDC - Be a Germ Stopper: Posters and Materials:](#) For Community and Public Settings Like Schools and Child Care Facilities). ... Cover Your Cough also available for health care settings.

[Cough Etiquette in Health Care Settings](#): Tips to prevent the spread of germs from coughing; information about Personal Protective Equipment; demonstrates the sequences for donning and...

[Workplace Planning](#): Includes flyers and posters, in English, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Chinese...

[Seasonal Flu Information for Workplaces & Employees](#) : Resources for Workplaces & Employees.

[Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Tools for Professionals](#) : Resources to help hospital administrators and state and local health officials prepare for an influenza pandemic.

[Patient Education Materials](#): This season's materials reflect outreach to high-risk groups, including caregivers and parents of infants .

* School Materials and Posters *

Germ Stopper Materials

"Be a Germ Stopper" posters and screensavers. Simple reminders for good hygiene for use in classrooms, cafeterias or laminated for bathrooms.

See the Stop the Spread of Germs site at www.cdc.gov/germstopper.

Cover Your Cough Materials

See the [Cover Your Cough](#) page on this site for poster and flyer formatted for use in schools.

"It's a SNAP" Toolkit

Program materials to help prevent school absenteeism

Activities for school administrators, teachers, students and others can do to help stop the spread of germs in schools.

See the handcleaning section of the "It's a SNAP" site at www.itsasnap.org/snap/about.asp.

Scrub Club

Kids can learn about health and hygiene and become members of the Scrub Club(TM) at <http://www.scrubclub.org/> The site features a fun and educational animated Webisode with seven "soaper-heros" who battle nasty villains who represent germs and bacteria. Kids learn the six key steps to proper handwashing through a webisode, handwashing song, interactive games, and activities for kids, and educational materials for teachers are also available to download.

