

Pandemic Preparedness for your Church

The Public Health Agency of Canada warns that “Canadians need to be prepared to respond to a potentially more severe form of the H1N1 flu virus that may emerge this fall. People have no natural immunity to protect against this virus.

As bearers of Christ’s love and compassion we want to be prepared to assist people in our church families and in our neighborhoods.

EMCC strongly recommends that our Churches study the facts and recommendations coming from the medical community and use this information to proactively work to prevent the spread of flu and formulate a plan of what to do if the numbers of infected people dramatically increase in your area.

Check out the links below for an understanding of H1N1, its symptoms and what to do to help prevent the spread such as good hand hygiene, cough hygiene, hand-washing stations in church, posters, education of the congregations, etc.

Canadians will want to see the **Public Health Agency of Canada** <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/index-eng.php> . On the homepage of this site, you can easily find your provincial health department site by clicking your province on the map of Canada. On the provincial sites you will find the links to the public health sites in your particular regions.

On these sites you can find Faith-based preparation guides like this one: **Guide to Influenza Pandemic Preparedness For Faith Groups:** http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/programs/emu/pan_flu/faith/guide.pdf and **Faith-Based and Community organizations Pandemic preparedness checklists** like this one : <http://www.waterlooregionpandemic.ca/en/resources/FaithBasedChecklist.pdf>

To see **Guidance Document for Mass Gatherings** click - http://www.waterlooregionpandemic.ca/en/personalpreparedness/resources/MassGatherings_Guidelines.pdf

Signage about Flu Prevention suitable for posting in your church or other public areas is another helpful tool available at the regional level. Here are some samples: **Handwashing Poster:** http://www.waterlooregionpandemic.ca/en/links/resources/Handwashing_Poster1.pdf And **Cover your Cough:** <http://www.waterlooregionpandemic.ca/en/links/resources/CoverYourCough.pdf>.

More resources and information is available from the **World Health Organization** <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/swineflu/en/>.

When developing your church plan be aware of the Public Health Department strategy in your region. Faith groups may be called upon to assist short-staffed government agencies.

Do a web search to see what other faith groups are doing. Here is a link to material put out by the Mennonite denomination: <http://www.churchpandemicresources.ca/>. You may also want to check <http://bridgesoflove.net>, using Internet Explorer.

Some of our EMC churches have already prepared for pandemic response and are willing to share plans with you. If you wish, you may contact Pastor Dennis Bells at dgbells@3web.net or Rev. Fred Friesen fred@bonavistachurch.ca.