

Influenza Flu Planning for Congregations

Precautions:

Take common sense precautions to slow or prevent the spread of the flu among members:

- Ask ill members to stay home. Provide alternative spiritual care for those who cannot attend worship or other functions due to these precautions.
- Ask members to sit in alternate rows, to provide the recommended 3' social distance during an outbreak.
- Provide tissues, hand sanitizers, and waste containers in various locations.
- Increase diligence when cleaning kitchens, restrooms, and classrooms. Use disinfectant spray on all hard surfaces, including door handles.
- Clean children's toys in Sunday school classes and day care facilities after each class. Mix one part household bleach to ten parts water (make fresh solution for the day of use), or use Clorox® surface spray with bleach.
- Turn off and mark all water fountains "do not use".
- Increase the supervision of small children's hand washing, coughing, sneezing, etc. (day care and Sunday school.)
- Consider changing communion practices (i.e. intinction rather than common plate and cups.) Servers should be illness free and use hand gel prior to serving.
- During passing of the peace, simply smile and say the words, without hugs or handshakes.
- Ensure that those handling food (for any church functions including Meals on Wheels, food pantry or in-house food service) follow enhanced precautions for safe food handling, including good hand washing.

Develop a means for worship when the congregation cannot gather. Some options:

- Contact local radio stations to explore remote feeds or taped worship.
- Contact the local Cable TV network about broadcasting videotape of worship services, church messages, or other events.
- Ask your computer internet service provider about podcasts and live internet feeds of worship, Sunday school classes, or other events. While the initial investment may be costly, this could open up a whole new ministry for those unable to attend - at a very reasonable continuing cost. Web based conferencing video/audio services such as skype.com or gotomeeting.com might be helpful.

Develop a continuation of business plan.

- Plan ways to encourage congregants to make their pledges.
- Plan for continuing office operations.

Ensure congregational care and support for ongoing community ministry.

- Congregational meals . Discuss a plan to continue operations within the guidelines for public gatherings and with precautions not to spread the flu.
- Member care group - explore how to provide supportive care and nutrition support to those unable to care for themselves (because of prior conditions or the flu)
- Attend training to "Help others in time of stress" – contact Countryside for further information