

St. Matthew's H1N1 Influenza Response Plan

Background

The Anglican Diocese of Ottawa developed an Influenza Pandemic Response Plan in May 2009. This plan lays out what is expected of parishes and ministries in the event that provincial and federal health authorities recommend that action be taken to curtail the normal activities so that the spread of the H1N1 virus can be minimized. The Bishop's Office is the coordinating body for the diocese, responsible for declaring when and if the Pandemic Response Plan will be put into effect in the churches and ministries of the diocese.

The diocesan Influenza Pandemic Response Plan specifies how communication will flow and what is expected at each level of response from the Bishop's Office, through Archdeacons and Regional Deans to parishes and ministries. At the parish level, communicating with all parishioners is a primary function. Key elements of the diocesan plan, which serves as a model for parishes, are outlined under four headings:

- Communication
- Leadership
- Pastoral Care
- Finance

The purpose of this document is to outline the approach that the Influenza Preparedness Work Group will use to coordinate influenza preparedness at St. Matthew's. The Influenza Preparedness Work Group has three members: Joan Harrison is a retired medical researcher, Wendy Pullan is a family physician and Verna Wilson's background is public health. Verna will act as the parish's Pandemic Preparedness Coordinator. This group reviewed the diocesan plan, including the comprehensive checklist contained in the plan, and has formulated an approach for St. Matthew's to follow.

How does H1N1 spread?

Like all influenza viruses, H1N1 is spread when someone coughs or sneezes, putting tiny droplets containing the virus into the air. The virus can spread as far as two metres. If these droplets land in your eyes, nose or mouth they may cause you to be infected with the virus.

Adapted from Ottawa Public Health

Goal

The goal of the H1N1 Influenza Preparedness Plan at St. Matthew's is to reduce the risk of acquiring H1N1 influenza viral infection at St. Matthew's church.

A key element of the preparedness planning is ensuring that everyone who comes to the church for church-related and non-church activities is aware of the plan.

What can I do to prevent the spread of H1N1 virus?

- ▶ *Get the H1N1 influenza shot as per official guidelines*
- ▶ *Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Also effective is a hand rub that contains 60 - 90 per cent alcohol.*
- ▶ *Sneeze and cough into your sleeve.*
- ▶ *Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.*
- ▶ *If you get sick with the flu, stay home from work or school and limit contact with others. Know when to contact your health care provider for advice.*

Adapted from the Ontario Influenza Plan

Communication

The Bishop's office is the central point of communication for the diocese, with the diocesan website being the primary tool of communication. A dedicated telephone extension and an e-mail address are also available to manage influenza-related communication. The Bishop or his designated Pandemic Coordinator will authorize all influenza-related communication for the duration of the pandemic.

At St. Matthew's, the Influenza Preparedness Work Group is responsible for ensuring that the parish is kept up-to-date. The parish website at www.stmatthewsottawa.ca will be the primary means of informing St. Matthew's parishioners and others about what is happening in the parish. The weekly

Bulletin and the Pulse of the Parish will also be used to disseminate information as necessary. All communication posted to the website will be dated so that everyone knows what the current instructions are.

In the event that the severity of the influenza pandemic is such that the Bishop's office directs parishes to cancel regularly scheduled activities such as church services, we will use an automated voice messaging system to notify everyone who is on the parish list. This system will only be used in an emergency.

Leadership

The key positions in the parish, both paid staff and volunteers, need to have backups named to ensure that the business of the parish continues as normally as possible. Parish committees have reviewed their mandates and identified essential functions that must be carried out during a pandemic situation. St. Matthew's Corporation and other key parish leaders will be kept informed of all necessary changes of responsibilities should one of the key leaders be unable to perform their duties.

Pastoral Care

Under the direction of our Rector, Canon Pat, the newly-formed Pastoral Care Team will keep in touch with parishioners who are in need of pastoral visiting at home

and in hospitals and care settings. The team members will be issued kits to assist them in reducing the likelihood of transmitting the H1N1 virus during any face-to-face contact. Additional kits will also be made available to other parishioners who are making home visits.

St. Matthew's will follow all diocesan directives for pastoral care as needed. Resource materials for prayers and liturgies are available at the diocesan office for use by parishes.

In the event that there is a felt need for reassurance and pastoral care for those who are distressed and fearful during an influenza pandemic, there will be additional training for lay pastoral care team members in providing telephone assistance if needed.

Finance and Administration

The Finance Committee has developed a contingency plan to ensure that the administrative work of the parish will continue throughout any pandemic situation. This plan includes:

<i>How do I know if I have H1N1 influenza?</i>		
<i>Almost always</i>	<i>Common</i>	<i>In addition sometimes</i>
<i>Cough and fever</i>	<i>Fatigue Muscle aches Sore throat Headache Decreased appetite Runny nose</i>	<i>Nausea Vomiting Diarrhea</i>

Adapted from Public Health Agency of Canada

- ▶ Cheque payments – Prepared by bookkeeper or treasurer – signed by any 2 of 4 signing officers
- ▶ Bill Reviews – done by administrator and various people throughout the parish. Can be done by any of bookkeeper, Treasurer, Corporation
- ▶ Bookkeeping – note that this work is already performed remotely. If current bookkeeper unable to perform we can seek someone with QuickBooks abilities and outsource the work
- ▶ Cash counting and bank deposits – we have several teams which work separately (4 teams of 5).
- ▶ PAR will continue without collections or deposits.
- ▶ Administrator work – Could tap into volunteers to cover half days

If you are not already using PAR, please consider whether you might use this system to financially support St. Matthews. The Stewardship package that was distributed in October includes an application form

Managing our Parish Life

For the duration of the pandemic, all public spaces in our church will have hand sanitizer available. Door knobs/ openers and other frequently touched places will receive additional attention during regular cleaning of the church. If necessary, our cleaning company is willing to provide additional cleaning as warranted. Frequently used spaces such as the kitchen and washrooms will receive extra attention so that they are kept as clean as possible.

Liturgy

Any changes to the way that liturgy is practiced will be directed by the Bishop's office when and if the severity of the pandemic warrants such changes. Here at St. Matthew's the Altar Guild is adjusting their practices to conform to diocesan guidelines for the cleaning of communion vessels. Changes that may be advised include discontinuing the use of the common cup and no hand-to-hand contact during the sharing of the peace. Effective November 1st, we will no longer shake hands during the sharing of the peace.

Sunday service greeters may remind us to use the hand sanitizer as we come to church and when we leave. All changes to normal practices will be spelled out in the Sunday bulletin.

Music

Choristers spend more time together than most of us who are members of St. Matthew's because they attend choir practices as well as Sunday services on a weekly basis. A handout about reducing the spread of the H1N1 virus was prepared by Virginia Lindsay, chair of the Music Committee. This handout provides all the necessary information for parents and others involved in the music program. It highlights the importance of hand washing and the use of hand sanitizer, as well as ensuring safe food service practices during snack periods at choir practice.

Sunday School and Nursery

Sunday School teachers are well aware of the need for additional precautions. Children attending Sunday School are being encouraged to wash their hands and use the hand sanitizer. The snacks are also individual instead of having children dip into a common bowl. Stuffed toys have been removed from the nursery to reduce the potential spread of the virus. They will not be returned to the nursery spaces until the threat has passed.

Youth Group

The youth group will have hand sanitizer available to them in their youth group room and the Youth Leader will be asked to reinforce the need for precautions to keep the potential spread of the virus to a minimum.

Outreach

Two outreach initiatives that may be affected by an increased level of concern during a pandemic situation are the Cornerstone Meal Program and the Out of the Cold Supper. In each case, provision will be made by the coordinators of these initiatives to cover the activities that would have been done by St. Matthew's parishioners in the event that these volunteers are unable to perform their duties.

Committees and other church groups

Until there is a clear indication that the threat of H1N1 influenza warrants a change, all committees and other groups can continue to operate as usual. Required changes will be announced through the usual channels including the parish website and the Sunday Bulletin.

Non-church groups meeting at St. Matthew's

The groups that meet regularly at St. Matthew's will be notified of any changes that they need to make regarding the use of our space.

Every effort will be made to keep the parish and its members informed of changes to the way we function. We encourage people to address any questions they may have to the Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Work Group through Verna Wilson at vwilson@magma.ca or at 613-722-9118.

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