

Pandemic Preparedness for OUUC

Section 1 - Plan for the impact on the organization and its mission:

The Accountable Persons will have the authority to develop, maintain and act upon a plan. This includes evolving the plan to fit changing circumstances. A wide-spread epidemic affecting a significant portion of the population may cause OUUC the need to cancel activities or events at the church in order to limit the further spread of illness. While every effort will be made to have Sunday services in the usual manner these could be affected. The Accountable Persons Team has ultimate authority to determine what events shall be cancelled and would contact the affected groups immediately upon making a decision. This authority extends to canceling the activities of affiliated groups and rental groups.

Should the staff be affected the expectation is that they will be out of the office and out of contact with other OUUC members and staff for a week. Each staff member should determine how their duties will be covered in such an absence: of particular urgency is the need to have an emergency service prepared and in the files for both a regular Sunday service and for the Religious Education program. Other staff members should be made aware of where to find these items.

Section 2 - Communicate with and educate your staff, members and persons in the communities that you serve:

The most reliable, extensive and up-to-date information on any pandemic can be found on the CDC's website which is at cdc.gov. This evolves constantly and as a result should be checked regularly for changes and updates on recommendations.

The local contact will be Thurston County [Public Health and Social Services](#) with guidance also from the WA State Department of Health.

Communication with church and affiliated/rental groups needs to be specific to the threat and should include signs and symptoms, ways to protect and how to limit the spread, as well as what the church's response could be. These items should be communicated via the church website, Realm email communication, the weekly email update, the incoming phone message (if necessary) and through the church organizational structure. This information must be communicated equally well to other groups that regularly use the church and they must be made aware of the plans. At all times, the latest guidelines and recommendations for this can be found on the CDC's website.

It should be communicated to the affiliate groups and rentals that they **MUST** report any known cases of a pandemic within their group to the church office.

Section 3 - Plan for the impact of a pandemic on staff, members and communities served by the church:

It is likely that in the event of a pandemic, the church will be affected by absences of both paid and volunteer staff. Plans need to be in place to fill those roles as necessary in the absence of these people or the inability of them to fulfill their usual role for a week or more. For some roles this will be easier than others. For paid staff, cross-training and communication regarding resources is essential. As mentioned earlier an “at the ready” service including sermon to be used in the case of the minister’s absence should be available. This also follows for the Religious Education program and the absence of the Director of Religious Education. Plans should be made for who should deliver these services in the minister’s or Director of Religious Education’s absence.

Volunteers should be made aware of who else within the congregation serves the function that they do, i.e. ushers knowing who the other ushers are. With this information readily available substitutes can be found and no one will feel any compunction to come to church if they or someone in their household is unwell.

Special attention needs to be paid to the mental health needs of the community. In the event of a pandemic the general fear and anxiety levels of the population will rise. The church should develop a roster of mental health professionals who are willing to provide support if needed. This should not be the sole responsibility of the minister; if he or she were to become ill, that would leave the congregation without that support. However, the minister may need to pay particular attention to the individuals in the community who are more at risk for mental health issues and refer them as needed. Additional plans may be necessary for any households in which the primary caregiver of someone else may fall ill. This may include those special needs children or adults, elderly who are cared for by someone else, and single parent households. Our Caring Friends, Pastoral Care Team, and Parish Nurse should be prepared to provide support. Possible needs are deliveries of groceries or medicines, childcare, or transportation to a medical appointment.

Section 4 - Set up policies to follow during a pandemic:

For paid staff non-penalized leave, flex-time and work from home options should be implemented as necessary to minimize the spread of illness. Employees who are ill should not be at work and should follow CDC guidelines determining the length of their absence.

Carefully examine ritual and practices at the church to determine if some should be discontinued for a period.

Section 5 - Allocate resources to protect staff, members and communities:

It may be necessary that OUUC focus its efforts during a pandemic to provide only services that are most needed during the emergency, thereby temporarily limiting its services to mental/spiritual health and social services. This decision would be made by the Accountable Persons Team.

Cleanliness and good hygiene become paramount in a pandemic emergency. Therefore, an adequate supply of disinfectant and tissues are necessary. These should be readily available to the church population. Signage indicating good cough etiquette and reminding people to use

supplies may be necessary. It may also be necessary to add an extra day to the Caretaker's schedule to maintain a high level of cleanliness on items such as doorknobs, light switches, phones, desks, doors and other surfaces.

Section 6 - Coordinate with external organizations:

Because recommendations and guidelines are in flux and will continue to be so, it is absolutely necessary that the church continue to seek updates from the CDC and other government agencies. This will be true no matter what the nature or timing of the emergency.

Next Steps

- Review plan with Staff and Board of Trustees
- Establish non-penalized leave and flextime for employees for use during pandemic period.
- Publicize existence of plan and its possible implications to church groups, affiliated groups and rentals.
- Make sure that current and complete contact information is on hand for all church groups, affiliated groups and rentals and that multiple staff persons know how to access that information.
- Prepare information and signage to distribute detailing signs, symptoms and prevention measures.
- Prepare for the possible absence of staff members as detailed above.
- Educate volunteers on how to find substitutes.
- Communicate with rentals and affiliates that their reporting responsibilities.
- Discussion with the Caring Friends, Pastoral Care Team and Parish Nurse to their responsibilities.
- Prepare roster of possible mental health support personnel.
- Ensure that adequate cleaning and disinfecting supplies as well as tissues are on hand.
- Determine electronic resources that may help maintain the community's spiritual and communal well-being during an emergency.