

Our health is in our hands

Based on information distributed by the World Health Organization, and believing that, as members of a congregation, we need to be responsible for protecting our own health, Mount Zion's Congregational Council has adopted the following Pandemic Policy, *in principle*, as a guide for congregational leaders and members.

Its purpose is to help our congregation deal, in a calm, reasoned and responsible way, with the threats posed by the current H1N1 virus.

We stress it is a guide only, parts of which may never require implementation, and parts of which may require modification due to changing situations and developments.

Combined with current information available through Waterloo Region health sources, we believe the policy can help us individually – and corporately as a congregation – to understand and deal with this latest threat from a flu virus.

Mount Zion's Pandemic Policy

Pandemic defined in accordance with the World Health Organization (WHO):

What is an influenza pandemic?

An influenza, more commonly called a flu, is a contagious respiratory illness caused by a virus. An influenza virus becomes a pandemic when the strain of the virus changes in composition, becomes highly contagious, spreads easily from person to person and moves rapidly around the world. Since the population is not immune to the new virus, it affects more people, causing higher rates of illness and death.

What is the contagious period?

In general, influenza can be contagious for 24 hours before any symptoms arise and for up to five days after the onset of symptoms. This means you can spread the virus without knowing you are infected.

Period	Phase	Description
Inter-pandemic Period	Phase 1	No new influenza virus subtypes have been detected in humans. An influenza virus subtype that has caused human infection may be present in animals. If present in animals, the risk of human infection is considered low.
	Phase 2	No new influenza virus subtypes have been detected in humans. However, a circulating animal influenza virus subtype poses a substantial risk of human disease.
Pandemic Alert Period	Phase 3	Human infection(s) with a new subtype, but no human-to-human spread, or at most rare instances of spread to a close contact.
	Phase 4	Small cluster(s) with limited human-to-human contact transmission but spread is highly localized, suggesting that the virus is not well adapted to humans.

	Phase 5	Larger cluster(s) but human-to-human spread still localized, suggesting that the virus is becoming increasingly better adapted to humans, but may not yet be fully transmissible (substantial pandemic risk).
Pandemic Period	Phase 6	Increased and sustained transmission in general population.
Post Pandemic Period		Return to Inter-Pandemic Period.

Policy for Worship during a Pandemic:

Everyone should be mindful of their own state of health, and that of others. If you are feeling unwell, or someone in your home is ill, you are strongly advised to remain at home.

Upon entry into the Church:

Greeters will greet – If you feel uncomfortable shaking hands upon entering the church, simply cross your arms in front of you. Likewise the pastors are not offended if you chose not to shake hands following worship.

Greeters will kindly remind people to use hand sanitizer before entering the Church.

Hand sanitizers should be used before entering the Church

Location of Hand Sanitizers: In the narthex on the side table.

Soap is available in the washrooms and is more effective than sanitizers.

Guidelines during worship:

Sneezing and Coughing – it is recommended to sneeze into the crease of your elbow so that germs are not transmitted with your hands.

Sharing of the Peace – If you feel uncomfortable sharing the peace by extending your hand, simply cross your arms in front of you and give a verbal sign of peace.

Communion Practices:

Parishioners are reminded that it is acceptable to receive communion in one kind (the bread) should they be concerned about contamination from the chalice. The doctrine of concomitance teaches that, in reception of communion, the body and blood of Christ "inhere" in each other; to receive one is to receive the other.

If the incident rate increases in our area, we will discontinue the practice of Holy Communion, until the level of risk decreases.

Change in Holy Communion:

Please note that because **INTINCTION** (dipping the bread into the wine) is the least hygienic way to receive communion we will replace the intinction cup with individual cups, along with offering the common cup.

If you use this method, please pick up an empty glass from the tray, go to the person with the pouring cup (the old intinction cup) and receive the wine.

Practices to be followed by the Altar Guild:

In setting up (pre service) and clearing (post service) the altar for communion, disposable gloves and disposable surgical masks should be used (and dispensed of immediately after using).

Fresh purificators for each chalice should be provided in ample supply and communion ministers should be properly instructed to shake out the purificator and reposition it so that a fresh spot is used to wipe the chalice after each use.

Disposable gloves and masks will be available in the sacristy.

It is suggested that a supply of disposable glasses be held in storage for use during times of increased risk. When setting up the glasses in the tray, leave space between the glasses to reduce the risk of any person touching a glass other than their own.

All communion vessels must be washed with hot, soapy water and rinsed in hot water before storage. Please use a new/clean tea towel for drying the communion vessels.

Guidelines for Continuing Education (Women's Group, Sunday Church School, Confirmation)

Teachers will encourage children to sanitize their hands before and after class

If there is an outbreak of H1N1, you may be advised to:

1. Refrain from providing snacks in the Nursery or Sunday School
2. Refrain children from sharing snacks if they bring them from home

Visitations:

Pastor Visitation in Homes or Hospitals: - will take all precautions required by the institution being visited
Friendly Visitors – will conduct their visits via phone

Fellowship Activities

At some stage there may be a suspension of fellowship activities until WHO decreases the Pandemic Alert to Phase 4.

Once a pandemic is over (World Health Organization decreases the Pandemic Alert to Phase 4), it is important that “normal” worship practices be reinstated as one means of reassuring people that the danger is past.

Useful references:

www.waterlooregionpandemic.ca

www.who.int/

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