



PANDEMIC RESPONSE

What is a Pandemic?
Are you prepared?

INTRODUCTION

The following information and resources have been compiled to help congregations and schools begin to prepare for a *pandemic*, thus lessening the impact on our community of churches and schools.

A *pandemic* is a disease event in which a serious, highly contagious virus is spread around the world affecting a large number of people. A *pandemic* occurs when a new virus emerges and there is little or no immunity to it in the human population. It spreads easily and quickly from person to person and/or through the air. The impact on society would likely be more serious, potentially affecting even healthy individuals. In addition to the physical impact on humans, the economic and societal effects of a severe *pandemic* could be very great.

The intent of this document is to provide resources for addressing key issues in congregations and schools that impact the delivery of essential services and operations. This information will by no means meet every need in organizations but is meant to provide a starting place. The complete reliance on the Triune God is the main pillar of strength for accomplishing these goals, and it is in the shadow of the Almighty that we can accomplish all things.

*He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the **shadow** of the **Almighty**.*
Psalms 91:1

And Jesus said to him, "... All things are possible for one who believes."
Mark 9:23

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- ❖ **What is a pandemic and am I prepared if one should occur?**
- ❖ **What can I do to mitigate or prevent a pandemic?**
- ❖ **What can I do to prepare for a pandemic?**
- ❖ **What should I do if a pandemic occurs in my church organization?**
- ❖ **What should I do to recover from a pandemic in my church organization?**
- ❖ **How will we contact our members if phone service or power are disrupted?**
- ❖ **What is our back-up plan for church records?**
- ❖ **Are we adequately insured against all potential disasters?**
- ❖ **How could we deliver core congregational services such as worship, Sunday school, and Bible study to our members if they could not assemble?**
- ❖ **How could we deliver core educational services such as school to our students if they could not assemble?**
- ❖ **Who can I contact for further information on a pandemic?**

These questions will be answered in the remainder of this document. For more information, please check the various resources and references listed on the last page.

The checklist that follows is divided into subject areas of Mitigation and Prevention, Preparedness, Response, and Recovery. Each subject area is subdivided into General Church Organization Considerations with points that follow specific to Schools, Child Care, and Preschools.

MITIGATION AND PREVENTION

General Church Organization Considerations

Completed	In Progress	Not Started	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Encourage yearly influenza vaccination for staff, members, and persons in the communities that you serve.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Distribute materials with basic information about the pandemic (such as the Corona Virus COVID19): signs and symptoms, how it is spread, ways to protect yourself and your family (e.g. respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette), family preparedness plans, and how to care for ill persons at home.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Evaluate your organizations' usual activities and services (including rites and religious practices if applicable) to identify those that may facilitate virus spread from person to person. Set up policies to modify these activities to prevent the spread of disease (e.g. guidance for respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette, and instructions for persons with symptoms to stay home rather than visit in person.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Consider determining the amount of supplies needed to promote respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette and how they will be obtained.

Additional School Considerations

Completed	In Progress	Not Started	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Work with local health department to implement effective infection prevention policies and procedures that help limit the spread of disease at schools (e.g. promotion of hand hygiene, cough/sneeze etiquette).
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide sufficient and accessible infection prevention supplies, such as soap, alcohol-based/waterless hand hygiene products (containing at least 60% alcohol), tissues, and receptacles for their disposal.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Disseminate information from public health sources covering routine infection control (e.g. hand hygiene, cough/sneeze etiquette), pandemic fundamentals (e.g. signs and symptoms, modes of transmission) as well as personal and family protection and response strategies (e.g. guidance for the at-home care of ill students and family members).
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Additional Child Care and Preschool Considerations

Completed	In Progress	Not Started	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Give special instruction to teaching staff, children, and their parents on how to limit the spread of infection. (For example, use good hand washing; cover the mouth with the elbow when coughing or sneezing; clean toys frequently.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Keep a good supply of things you will need to help control the spread of infection. (For example, plenty of soap, paper towels, and tissues.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tell families that experts recommend yearly flu shots for all children 6 months to 5 years old and for anyone who cares for children in that age

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | range. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Tell parents to let your program know if their child(ren) are sick. Keep accurate records of when children or staff are absent. Include a record of the kind of illness that caused the absence (e.g. diarrhea/vomiting, coughing/breathing problems, rash, or other). |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Teach staff a standard set of steps for checking children and adults each day as they arrive to see if they are sick. Make it clear that any child or adult who is ill will not be admitted. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Give staff and students’ families reliable information on the issues listed below in their languages and at their reading levels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How to help control the spread of flu by hand washing / cleansing, and covering the mouth when coughing or sneezing. ○ How to recognize a person that may have the disease, and what to do if they think they have it. ○ How to care for ill family members. ○ How to develop a family plan for dealing with a pandemic. |

PREPAREDNESS

General Church Organization Considerations

Completed	In Progress	Not Started	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Assign key staff with the authority to develop, maintain, and act upon a pandemic preparedness and response plan.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Determine the potential impact of a pandemic on your organization’s usual activities and services. Plan for situations likely to require increasing, decreasing, or altering the services your organization delivers.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Determine the potential impact of a pandemic on outside resources that your organization depends on to deliver its services (e.g. supplies, travel, etc.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Outline what the organizational structure will be during an emergency and revise periodically. The outline should identify key contacts with multiple back-ups, role and responsibilities, and who is supposed to report to whom.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify and train essential staff (including full-time, part-time, and unpaid or volunteer staff) needed to carry on your organization’s work during a pandemic. Include back-up plans, cross-train staff in other jobs so that if staff are sick, others are ready to come in to carry on the work.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Test your response and preparedness plan using an exercise or drill, and review and revise your plan as needed.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Plan for staff absences during a pandemic due to personal and/or family illnesses, quarantines, and school, business, and public transportation closures. Staff may include full-time, part-time, and volunteer personnel.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Evaluate access to mental health and social services during a pandemic for your staff, members, and persons in the communities that you serve.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify persons with special needs (e.g. elderly, disabled, limited English speakers) and be sure to include their needs in your response and preparedness plan.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Develop tools to communicate information about pandemic status and your organization’s actions. This might include websites, social media, flyers, local newspaper announcements, pre-recorded widely distributed phone messages, etc.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Set up policies for non-penalized staff leave for personal illness or care for

- sick family members during a pandemic.
- Set up mandatory sick-leave policies for staff suspected to be ill, or who become ill at the worksite. Employees should remain at home until their symptoms resolve and they are physically ready to return to duty (Know how to check up-to-date CDC recommendations).
- Set up policies for flexible work hours and working from home.
- Set procedures for activating your organization’s response plan when a pandemic is declared by public health authorities and altering your organization’s operations accordingly.
- Consider focusing your organization’s efforts during a pandemic to providing services that are most needed during the emergency (e.g. mental/spiritual health or social services).
- Understand the roles of federal, state, and local public health agencies and emergency responders and what to expect and what not to expect from each in the event of a pandemic.
- Assign a point of contact to maximize communication between your organization and your state and local public health systems.
- Work together with other faith-based and community organizations in your local area and through networks (e.g. denominations, associations, etc.) to help your communities prepare for a pandemic.
- Develop a plan for the backing up of church records.
- Investigate whether you are adequately insured against all disasters.
- Develop a plan to have adequate financial reserves to help our employees (or our churches) should our revenue stream immediately end for an extended time. If you do not have an online giving program in place, consider Michigan District Church Extension Fund’s Excel in Giving program (www.mi-cef.org).
- Share information about your pandemic preparedness and response plan with staff, members, and persons in the communities that you serve.

Additional School Considerations

Completed	In Progress	Not Started	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Delineate accountability and responsibility as well as resources for key stakeholders engaged in planning and executing specific components of the operational plan. Assure that the plan includes timelines, deliverables, and performance measures.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Incorporate into the pandemic plan the requirements of students with special needs (e.g. low income students who rely on the school food service for daily meals), those in special facilities (e.g., juvenile justice facilities) as well as those who do not speak English as their first language.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Implement an exercise/drill to test your pandemic plan and revise it periodically.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify the authority responsible for declaring a public health emergency at the state and local levels and for officially activating the public school district’s pandemic response plan.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Identify for all stakeholders the legal authorities responsible for executing the community operational plan, especially those authorities responsible for case identification, isolation, quarantine, movement restriction, and healthcare services.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Work with your local and/or state health department and state education agencies to coordinate with their pandemic plans.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Participate in exercises of the community’s pandemic plan.

- Consider provision of psychosocial support services for the staff, students, and their families during and after a pandemic.
- Develop scenarios describing the potential impact of a pandemic on student learning (e.g. student and staff absences), school closings, and extracurricular activities based on having various levels of illness among students and staff.
- Develop alternative procedures to assure continuity of instruction (e.g. web-based distance instruction, telephone trees, mailed lessons and assignments, instruction via local radio or television stations) in the event of school closures.
- Develop a continuity of operations plan for essential central office functions including payroll and ongoing communication with students and parents.
- Establish policies and procedures for students and staff sick leave absences unique to a pandemic (e.g. non-punitive, liberal leave).
- Establish policies for transporting ill students.
- Assess readiness to meet communication needs in preparation for a pandemic, including regular review, testing, and updating of communication plans.
- Develop a dissemination plan for communication with staff, students, and families, including lead spokespersons and links to other communication networks.
- Ensure language, culture, and reading level appropriateness in communications.
- Develop and test platforms (e.g. social media, hotlines, telephone trees, dedicated websites, and local radio or TV stations) for communicating pandemic status and actions to school staff, students, and families.
- Develop and maintain up-to-date communications contacts of key public health and education stakeholders to provide regular updates as the pandemic unfolds.
- Assure the provision of redundant communication systems/channels that allow for the expedited transmission and receipt of information.
- Anticipate the potential fear and anxiety of staff, students, and families as a result of rumors and misinformation and plan communications accordingly.

Additional Child Care and Preschool Considerations

Completed	In Progress	Not Started	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Form a committee of staff members and parents to produce a plan for dealing with a pandemic. Include members from all different groups your program serves.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Learn who in your area has legal authority to close child care programs if there is an emergency.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Learn whether the local/state health departments and agencies that regulate child care have plans. Be sure your plan is in line with their plans.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Encourage parents to have a “Plan B” for finding care for their children if the program is closed during a pandemic.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Talk to other child care and preschool programs in your area to share information that could make your plan better.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Plan ways to help families continue their child’s learning if your child care program or preschool is closed.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Make sure staff and families have seen and understand your pandemic

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | plan. Explain why you need to have a plan. Give them a chance to ask questions. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Assign one person to identify reliable sources of information and watch for public health warnings, school closings, and other actions taken to prevent the spread of disease. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Have a plan for keeping children who become sick at your program away from other children until the family arrives, such as a fixed place for a sick room. |

RESPONSE

General Church Organization Considerations

- Find up-to-date, reliable pandemic information and other public health advisories from state and local health departments, emergency management agencies, and CDC. Make this information available to your organization and others.
- When appropriate, include basic information about pandemic in public meetings (e.g. sermons, classes, trainings, small group meetings, and announcements).
- Ensure that what you communicate is appropriate for the cultures, languages, and reading levels of your staff, members, and persons in the communities that you serve.
- Follow CDC travel recommendations during an influenza pandemic. Recommendations may include restricting travel to affected domestic and international sites, recalling non-essential staff working in or near an affected site when an outbreak begins, and distributing health information to persons who are returning from affected areas.
- Advise staff, members, and persons in the communities you serve to follow information provided by public health authorities – state and local health departments, emergency management agencies, and CDC.

Additional Child Care and Preschool Considerations

- Require staff members to stay home if they think they might be sick. If they become sick while at the program, require them to go home and stay home. Give staff paid sick leave so they can stay home without losing wages.
- Require ill staff and students to stay at home until their flu symptoms are gone and they feel ready to come back to work.

RECOVERY

- Assemble the Crisis Intervention Team (also known as Critical Incident Stress Debriefing)
- Return to normal operations as quickly as possible.
- Schools and churches need to keep students, families, and the media informed.
- Focus on the building, as well as people, during recovery.
- Provide assessment of emotional needs of staff, students, families, and responders.
- Remember anniversaries of crises.
- Evaluate. Evaluating recovery efforts will help prepare for the next crisis.

How will we contact our members if phone service or power are disrupted?

- A major factor in dealing with a disaster is the focus on communication. Many congregations during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina faced a major challenge in both locating their members and determining their status. Planning before an event can help minimize the communication challenge. Develop a plan that allows for you to communicate with them but also allow them to contact you when they reach safety.

- Develop a number/plan that congregation members can call to check in with your church that is an 800 number in another location. Consider another LCMS congregation in a different state or perhaps the District Office.
- Consider gathering the following information for each congregation member:
 - Congregation Member
 - Home phone number
 - Cell phone number
 - E-mail address
 - Facebook, Twitter or other social media information
 - Out-of-state contact name and phone number
- Encourage your members to plan in advance where they will go, should they be evacuated. Other information you might want for each family in your congregation records is a Family Communication Plan.
 - Family Communication Plan
 - Contact name
 - Telephone number
 - Out-of-state contact name and phone number
 - Neighborhood meeting place
 - Meeting place phone number
- You should plan to annually update any and all information for each family and gather it from new members as they join the church.
- In addition:
 - Develop an accurate shut-in list.
 - Develop a list of those with physical needs or limited mobility.
 - Share community planning, including evacuation destinations, with these people.
 - Gather their family communication plan and contact information.
- You might consider checking with your community about evacuation plans for special needs members of your congregation. Your church would need to ask which members fit these criteria. These could include:
 - Those without a vehicle.
 - Non-English speaking families.
 - Hearing or mobility impaired.
 - Single working parents.
 - Special dietary needs (i.e. diabetics).
- Have all records and contact information saved electronically with someone in another area and give an electronic copy on a USB drive to one or two church leaders.
- Your church should also discuss who will be the contact person to gather updates on members.
- Consider purchasing a communication program that allows you to tape one message and then call all members with the message. You can do a Google search on these services, including:
 - School Reach
 - Constant Connect
 - One Call Now
- You might consider working with the Red Cross and community agencies to have your church designated as an evacuation site in case of a community emergency.

What is our back up plan for church records?

- Congregations and schools should have a backup system in place for all data, whether it be electronic or hard copy, at an off-site location.

Are we adequately insured against all potential disasters?

- Congregations and schools should check with their insurance companies for coverage on a variety of situations including: pandemic, natural disasters, etc.

- Note: Many insurance companies do not insure against revenue loss.

How could we deliver core congregational services such as worship, Sunday school, and Bible study to our members if they could not assemble?

- Basic Assumptions:
 - Vital resources will be available such as electricity, internet, cell phone, and telephone services.
 - While large group assemblies may not be possible, small groups or private visitation may be allowed.
- Worship services by necessity would emphasize the Word.
 - Worship services could be provided over the internet using the list of churches in the District that have online services, recorded, or written sermons.
 - Pastors may be able to record a weekly sermon in a podcast, record a video for YouTube, GodTube, Facebook, or some other media.
 - Worship services could be provided over the radio, with recorded messages sent to local radio stations.
 - The Lutheran Hour and Worship Anew may also be used to help provide in-home worship opportunities.
 - The District or the Synod may want to consider ways of providing a worship service over cable or broadcast TV.
- Sacramental Ministry
 - The Pastor and Elders may be able to make home and hospital visits to bring Communion to those who are ill. Elders would need to be trained and commissioned for this ministry. It may be possible for the Pastor to consecrate the elements and have the Elders take them to individual homes and families. In all likelihood, celebration of the Lord's Supper will be very limited.
 - Individual members can be instructed on how to do an emergency baptism, if the need should arrive. Luther's Small Catechism and our Lutheran Hymnals have orders for emergency baptisms.
- Educational Services
 - Small group, in-home Bible studies may be an option.
 - Online Bible study groups may also be an option.
 - The Pastor could set up a Bible study blog online for members to participate.
 - The same resources used to deliver sermons could be used for Bible studies.
 - A list of on-line Bible studies could be made available to members, including family devotions for families of all ages and stages of life.
- Special Need Situations: Hospital Visits, Shut-In Calls, Funerals
 - Because of the potential threat of the spread of disease, committal services may have to be private, for immediate family only. Funeral and memorial services may have to be delayed.
 - Visits to the sick may require special clothing, if allowed at all. Churches and church staff (both lay and professional) may have to work in cooperative efforts to meet these needs.

How could we deliver core educational services such as school to our students if they could not assemble?

- Technology today allows us more opportunities to meet than ever before. Students would need access to the Internet through a computer or handheld device, but teacher-led instruction could then further enhance the educational experience.
- Examples of how school or teachers could respond include:
 - Create a free blog on which you list assignments, resources, concerns for students. Encourage them to post their own questions or concerns. Exchange information via e-mail attachments or mailed documents. One Web site that offers this capability is <http://www.thoughts.com/free-blog>.
 - Utilize a video conference format that would let you talk to a large group or even display your computer screen to the group. Examples of sites that offer this type of service are Zoom (<https://zoom.us/home?zcid=2478>) and Skype (<https://www.skype.com/en/>).

- Develop a website and then post materials there. This could include video, website links, etc. One location is <http://www.schoolrack.com/>. Also, many content-rich websites exist that a teacher could direct students to for specific content.
- Create a podcast. A simple teaching tool may be found at <http://www.seminars.apple.com/seminarsonline/podcastproducer/apple/>.
- Form an e-mail distribution list, which allows the teacher to e-mail directions, assignments, or any other messages or documents to all students at once. Students may choose how to respond to the group, teacher etc. Any school management system (Blackboard, Chalkboard, Google classroom, etc) would be helpful in accomplishing this.

EMERGENCY AGENCIES

- ❖ Michigan Department of Community Health
 - OFFICE OF PUBLIC HEALTH/PREPAREDNESS
 - 517.335.8150
 - Bioterrorism Emergency Notification
 - Actual or Threatened Biological or Chemical Terrorist Event
 - Bus. Hrs. 517.335.8150
 - After Hrs. 517.335.9030
 - General Information
 - Communicable Disease: 517.335.8150
 - Laboratory: 517.335.8063
 - After Hrs. Emergency: 517.335.9030
- ❖ Emergency help number: 911 or local emergency dispatch
- ❖ Local Emergency Manager: Check local listings in your area
- ❖ State Emergency Manager: www.michigan.gov/emd
- ❖ US Department of Health and Human Services: <http://www.hhs.gov/>
- ❖ Local Health Dept.: Check local listings in your area
- ❖ Dept. of Homeland Security: www.dhs.gov/
- ❖ Center for Disease Control: www.cdc.gov or 800.232.4636
- ❖ Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA): www.fema.gov
- ❖ Department of Homeland Security “Ready” Program: www.ready.gov
- ❖ American Red Cross: www.redcross.org

RESOURCES

The Center for Disease Control ([cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)) has the most accurate and up-to-date information on the development of a possible pandemic

REFERENCES

- ❖ American Red Cross: www.redcross.org
- ❖ Center for Disease Control: www.cdc.gov