

Pandemic Alert Update: April 30, 2009

On April 29, 2009 the WHO (World Health Organization) elevated their Pandemic Alert status from Phase Four to Phase Five. The significance of this change in status is the WHO's directive that countries which have not activated their pandemic response plans should activate them immediately.

Such a change is precautionary in nature. The WHO Director-General reminds us that new diseases such as the current Swine Flu Influenza are by definition poorly understood, subject to rapid mutation and unpredictable in spread or behaviour.

For definitions of pandemic phases, visit www.who.int and follow the links to Swine Flu updates.

What does this mean for the Diocese of Toronto?

Federal, Provincial and Municipal governments have already activated their pandemic plans, resulting in enhanced surveillance and the distribution of current and important health-related information updates.

Priorities for health agencies presently include heightened surveillance, early detection and treatment of cases and basic infection control.

Clergy and laity are encouraged to remain alert and informed. Useful websites include:
Toronto Public Health, www.toronto.ca/health;
Ontario Public Health, www.ontariopublicheath.ca.

Most importantly, clergy and laity are encouraged to follow the directives of public health officials as regards appropriate and necessary precautions in public settings.

Clergy are encouraged to review Appendix D, page 17 of the Diocesan Pandemic Response Plan (www.toronto.anglican.ca/images/Pandemic_Plan_4.pdf) for information regarding liturgical conduct and precautions. Lay pastoral visitors and lay anointers are encouraged to review their pastoral practice so as to incorporate universal health care precautions.

Clergy and laity are encouraged to:

- Wash your hands regularly using soap and water whenever possible.
- Use hand sanitizers when appropriate and during worship as per Diocesan guidelines.
- Sneeze or cough into your sleeve; if using a tissue or handkerchief, wash your hands following use.
- Clergy and laity who are feeling ill should avoid pastoral duties which involve physical interaction with others.
- Clergy are encouraged to respond pastorally to the care of the vulnerable within their congregations.

- Anglican tradition allows for receiving communion in one kind only. Members should continue to feel free to decline the chalice.
- Intinction (dipping the bread into the chalice) is no longer an acceptable practice in this diocese since it is a significant health hazard.
- If you feel uncomfortable exchanging the peace, you may wish to gently bow to your neighbours.

Additional updates will appear on this website as required.

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