

# **Pandemic Plan**

## **Lethbridge Mennonite Church**

### **Introduction**

Many health care experts say that a pandemic (or another major emergency) is inevitable. The church has a role in planning and responding, on the basis of our faith, our vision and mission.

Mennonite Church Canada recently developed a website ([www.churchpandemicresources.ca](http://www.churchpandemicresources.ca); as well as [twitter.com/ChurchFlu](https://twitter.com/ChurchFlu)) for church leaders and congregations to learn about and prepare for a potential pandemic, and how to minister to members and surrounding communities in the event of a pandemic, a major disaster or health emergency.

The pastor and two church members (a nurse and a manager) were appointed in June 2009 to look at how our congregation could be educated about pandemic preparedness and in particular examine some possible responses to community, congregational and individual needs when a pandemic or other emergency arises.

Our group met approximately every six weeks. We reviewed documents available through Mennonite Church Canada and other websites. We also contacted our local health authorities and city emergency planning office to find out about our local pandemic preparedness contact person and plans.

This plan summarizes our discussions and recommendations to Church Council and congregation.

### **How would our congregation be impacted in the event of a pandemic, a major disaster or health emergency?**

- Regular church activities (worship, communion, pastoral care, visitations, care groups, other gatherings) may be affected and modified by a health emergency or a major disaster
- Many of the people who attend our church are seniors, persons with disabilities, persons with no immediate close families, and could possibly be quite isolated in the event of a health emergency or a major disaster.
- Our church and our members are involved with community groups, such as the Soup Kitchen, the Thrift Store... that may be asked to increase or modify their volunteer work in the event of a health emergency or a major disaster
- Several church members are professionally involved working with persons who may be at higher risk during times of a health emergency or a major disaster (homeless people, persons with developmental disabilities).

### **Our strengths:**

Lethbridge Mennonite Church is already in a good position to respond to a health emergency or a major disaster. Rather than creating new structures and procedures, we should build on existing ones.

- We have communication tools, such as a church directory updated on a yearly basis, and the prayer chain.
- We have other effective ways of communicating and supporting each other: church council, women's fellowship; men's breakfast, Bible study group.
- Church members are divided into 3 serving groups with leaders who are able to organize the groups.
- Our deacons have a list of church members, and are trying to visit each of us, at least once a year.
- We already have cleaning policies and procedures (for use of kitchen and church cleanliness)

- We have a church website (that could be used to post information, updates, scriptures and hymns in addition to a weekly sermon).
- We have mailboxes for everyone at church.
- Many members in the church have special gifts that could be accessed in case of emergency (such as retired health professionals, people with a gift of hospitality, former pastors who could assist with additional pastoral care)
- We are already involved in community support, through the soup kitchen, the MCC thrift store, our contacts with other community organizations
- Our pastor has contacts with other church leaders in Lethbridge, as well as other Mennonite leaders in Alberta (through Mennonite Church Alberta)
- Many church members have links with members from other congregations in Lethbridge and surrounding communities.
- Our church has started to develop contacts with the church neighbourhood.

**Recommendations to the congregation:**

Preparing for a health emergency or a natural disaster includes education and prevention, an immediate response plan, and a plan for long-term support to those affected by the event.

It will be important to be ready, while at the same time not scare or overwhelm people.

Building on existing strengths, we are making the following recommendations:

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Time-line</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Introduce the topic of pandemic preparation to church council and congregation	Fall 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could include a sermon on biblical basis for helping others in times of need and the theological basis for pandemic preparation</li> <li>• Could include the study of: Beyond our Fears, a resource published by Mennonite Publishing Network</li> </ul>
Provide pandemic preparation information to congregation	Fall – Winter 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mennonite Church Canada, Canadian Red Cross, Health Canada, Chinook Health... have fact sheets, posters, pamphlets that are ready to be used.</li> <li>• The pandemic preparedness group could take the lead in doing this.</li> <li>• We could also have an information session for the church facilitated by the pandemic preparedness group.</li> <li>• Need to make sure that the information is available also to those with language or other barriers.</li> <li>• Need to consider how the church can support those with limited resources, as they consider assembling an emergency kit.</li> </ul>
Inform local Emergency Preparedness Group about our plans and be in touch with them.	August 2009	The committee has contacted several persons in Chinook Health. They are supportive of our initiative. We are now on their planning and mailing list.
Review policies and procedures on church cleanliness and safety	Fall 2009	Look at availability of gloves, tissue, alcohol pumps... Proper washing of dishes and food preparation.
Have a master document of all emergency preparedness	August 2009 –	The pastor has started filing things in a binder that is kept in pastor's office.

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Time-line</b>	<b>Comments</b>
documents	ongoing	
Update / upgrade contact lists, to include cell-phone numbers and e-mail addresses	Fall – Winter 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The pastor keeps updates on mailing addresses in her church directory.</li> <li>• It may help to get additional information on how to contact people, in case the main phone lines don't work any more.</li> <li>• The list could be kept in a locked cabinet, to protect people's privacy.</li> </ul>
Make and maintain a list of more vulnerable persons in the church (people without immediate families, with disabilities, without transportation...) who may require additional support from church in case of emergency	Fall – Winter 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to ensure that there is consent from people to be on such a list.</li> <li>• Need to decide on whose responsibility it would be to maintain such a list.</li> </ul>
Make and maintain a list of church members with special gifts / resources who could be accessed if a special need arises	Fall – Winter 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to ensure that there is consent from people to be on such a list.</li> <li>• Need to decide on whose responsibility it would be to maintain such a list.</li> </ul>
Review terms of reference for existing church groups (such as deacons, church council, serving groups...) and possibly add tasks that may occur in times of emergency	Fall – Winter 2009	Church Council to take the lead
Discuss how church would function in case of a local emergency: staffing issues, changes in worship...	Fall – Winter 2009	Church Council to take the lead
Coordination of future pandemic preparedness activities: Council could appoint a specific group to continue the work, or ask the existing group to carry on.	Fall – Winter 2009	Church Council to take the lead

## **Conclusion**

Although not an immediate or urgent concern, we recommend that Church Council encourages our congregation to start preparing and planning for a pandemic or another major disaster.

Respectfully submitted,

The Committee  
August 2009