


# Preparing for a Possible Pandemic


May 1, 2009

Creating and maintaining safe places where all can thrive is a high priority for the Christian church. We believe this is God's longing and intention for all people.

As of April 29, the [World Health Organization](#) \* (WHO) has raised the pandemic alert level from phase 4 to phase 5. Phase 5 is characterized by human-to-human spread of the virus into at least two countries in one WHO region. Raising the alert level to phase 5 is a signal to governments, health care agencies, and related industries to be prepared to implement their pandemic preparedness plan. Many experts are recommending that unnecessary travel be postponed or cancelled.

General Council personnel have given thought to ways of responding to an influenza outbreak. This is outlined in [The United Church of Canada Emergency Plan](#).

At this time, we encourage all ministries to adopt a prevention approach. Practising good hygiene, including proper hand-washing techniques, is the first step. Stay home if you are exhibiting flu-like symptoms—fever, cough, sore throat, muscle and joint pain, shortness of breath, loss of appetite, runny nose or nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.

This website offers additional tips for action, including suggestions for adjusting worship practices. [Being Faithful during Cold and Flu Season](#)  [PDF: 2 pp/73 KB] gives practical measures that take on spiritual significance in a season such as this. For those doing pastoral visitation, good hygiene and hand-washing techniques are essential to protect everyone from the spread of illness.

Following the direction of the public health unit in your area or municipality about changes in gathering practices is important. Congregations and other ministries should ensure that their communication tree/phone directory is up to date in case it has to be used due to a decision by the public health authorities.

This is a special season to care for one another's well-being by taking action to ensure we do not spread disease and by accompanying all who are ill or fearful in prayer, in messages of concern and love, and in continued labours for a healthy, whole, and just world.

May God bless you in your various ministries in the name of Jesus Christ.

In partnership,

Bev Oag  
Program Coordinator  
Duty of Care & Incorporated Ministries