



## Epidemic preparedness planning guidelines for churches and dioceses

Church and diocesan leaders should consider these areas while making preparedness plans. Please visit our [Faith-based response to epidemics](#) page for tips on preventing the spread of infectious diseases in churches and [episcopalrelief.org/preparedness](http://episcopalrelief.org/preparedness) for planning guides.

- **Establish roles.** Designate point persons for different tasks in the plan (*e.g. who will make phone calls, send emails or update the website?*).
- **Make friends with other churches and clergy.** Your new friends may be able to fill in the gaps as clergy, church leaders, staff or volunteers take time to recover. Other churches may also want to combine resources in order to respond to the epidemic.
- **Talk with your local health department and VOAD** to determine ways in which your volunteers and facilities might be useful during the response. National Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) members respond to disasters across the country. [See a full list of State VOADs.](#)
- **Prepare communications ahead of time.** Make sure phone/email lists, bulletin and newsletter language, webpage for updates and social media messages are prepared ahead of time. When you're ready, you can immediately blast out information about church closing, service adaptations and general health guidelines.
  - Sometimes these messages are better received from leadership. Make sure bishops, rectors and other clergy are sharing these messages from their individual accounts as well as church and diocesan accounts.
  - Share helpful information from the [CDC](#) and [WHO](#). Take advantage of the CDC's [library of graphics and messaging](#) that are easy to reuse on social media channels.
  - This guide has [helpful handouts](#) that can be printed and distributed in your community ahead of an outbreak.
- **Help ensure that vulnerable and hard-to-reach community members stay connected to public health news and other services.** These may include low-income people and families, non-English speakers, homeless people and families, shut-in or homebound individuals, migrant workers, immigrants and refugees and people with physical, sensory, mental health, intellectual and cognitive disabilities (*e.g. If schools are closed, consider providing nutritious meals to children who would normally be receiving school lunches*).
- **Invest in/download an internet conferencing system for meetings and take advantage of social media streaming platforms** (*e.g. Facebook Live*) to share prayers and sermons which will encourage people to stay home if they are ill and allow



people to still be connected as they recover. Make sure you know how it works for when the time comes.

- **Consider other ways of receiving contributions** such as via mail or through the internet.
- **Improve hygiene/sanitation practices in the church** (*e.g. hand washing/regularly cleaning surfaces, etc*).
- **Think about ways your ministries can continue** even if the way you run it has to change (*e.g. hosting community meals vs delivering meals to homes*).
- **Notify community groups who use your building.** Let them know about limited access to the building and of any cleaning procedures in place.