



Pandemic Plan for the Church

Ministering to the Community in a Time of Crisis

Caring for the Worker

At such a time for what this plan is written, stress levels will be above and beyond what the average person deals with on a daily basis. As disease and mortality rates are estimated it would be a safe assumption that every individual would be affected. Keeping this in mind, all persons participating in the alternative care facility (ACF), or visiting the sick, will very likely be dealing with the physical and emotional strains as those to whom they are ministering. In addition to physical and emotional stress, challenges to faith; workers will be exposed to the virus and possibly become ill themselves. Monitoring and caring for the well-being of the worker is as important as caring for the sick.

Monitoring for Illness

Although, wearing personal protective equipment (PPE), and practicing infection control, there is still no guarantee that a person will not acquire the circulating virus. Remember people are contagious even before they exhibit the signs and symptoms of a disease. Many people may even continue to work while feeling sick because they recognize the need and feel compelled to continue. Monitoring the workers on a daily basis will ensure the disease is not spread by those serving. In addition, those who are serving are cared for properly.

Monitoring consists of asking the worker if they are experiencing any signs or symptoms of the virus and acquiring their temperature. Morning meetings should include a time to observe your workers, and screen for any possible sickness. Using a questionnaire form can help in this process, it should include the following questions:

- Have you experienced in the last twenty-four hours any influenza like symptoms including?
 - Sore throat
 - Cough
 - Acute onset of respiratory illness
 - Fever >100.4° F (38°C)
 - Joint pain
 - Fatigue
 - Nausea, Vomiting, Diarrhea, abdominal pain
- What role do you play in the ACF?
 - Admittance/Triage
 - Direct patient care

- Housekeeping
- Maintenance
- Does your role require you to wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and if so, please state the equipment?
- Are you compliant with your PPE requirements?

People should check their temperature twice a day. If a worker says yes to any of these, they should be sent home to voluntarily quarantine themselves until their temperature returns to normal for twenty-four hours without any medications. If necessary, they should also see a doctor.

Keeping a daily log would enable the leadership to monitor potential concerns regarding proper usage of PPE, compliance with infection control measures, as well as caring for the workers properly.

Monitoring for Stress

If the conditions are as health officials predict, then it can also be expected that stress levels will be elevated. Stress can be defined as the force or circumstance that is causing emotional, physical, and spiritual tension and strain. Although stress is part of our daily lives, in many cases stress can even be a good thing, for example without the stress of having to accomplish daily tasks; we would have no reason to get out of bed in the morning. However, too much stress can be traumatic and even threaten our health and well-being.

It will be expected that much of the population will be affected either by illness or death. Then it can also be expected that all of the population will be affected by knowing or having a loved one having fallen victim to the disease. Although many people may be willing to work and help in caring for others, keep in mind, their health and well-being has also been compromised simply by the breadth of the entire situation. A pandemic may not only challenge emotional and physical health, it may also cause those with even the deepest of faith, to be in a crisis.

Leaders in the Church and in the community will be expected to maintain a sense of composure and continue to be that pillar to which all have looked to in the past for leadership. In addition, those who are serving in an ACF or other form of service in the community will also continue to be exposed to the stressors of the situation. Recognizing your own levels of stress, as well as those around you will aid you in addressing them. This will ensure the mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being for all concerned.

Organizations already established responding to the hurting in a time of crisis are a local Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) volunteers in your community, and Rapid Response Team Chaplains with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. For more information, please visit their website at: <http://billygraham.org/what-we-do/evangelism-outreach/rapid-response-team/about/>. Perhaps you may consider becoming trained as a chaplain as part of your preparedness plan.

Signs and Symptoms of Stress

If a person has experienced a traumatic event, or if the event continues without relief, they may experience some strong physical, emotional and spiritual reactions, this is quite normal. Some signs and symptoms of stress include:

- Physical:
 - Headache
 - Nausea/vomiting
 - Weakness
 - Fatigue
 - Elevated heart rate/blood pressure
 - Chest pain
 - Shortness of breath
 - Confusion
 - Inability to sleep
 - Startle easily
 - Loss or increase of appetite
- Emotional/Mental:
 - Inability to sleep
 - Nightmares
 - Fear
 - Anxiety
 - Guilt
 - Agitation
 - Depression
 - Crying
 - Emotional outbursts
 - Withdrawal
 - Loss or increase of appetite
 - Increase in alcohol consumption
 - Startle easily
 - Panic

- Inappropriate outbursts
- Spiritual
 - Sense of hopelessness
 - Sense of helplessness
 - No longer praying
 - Finding it hard to be thankful
 - Feeling abandoned by God
 - No longer in the Word
 - Angry at God/blaming God

These lists are not all inclusive. For some, the stress may pass with prayer, time, and rest. However, for others, if it is not addressed, it may be harder for some individuals to successfully process through. In some situations, it may take months or even more for these reactions to pass. It is important to determine if someone is in a crisis situation and address it. As Christians, and especially as leaders, we want to help when someone is in crisis; however, some may need professional help, especially if they are experiencing chest pain or shortness of breath or considering doing harm to themselves or others.

Relieving Stress

Many of us have our own ways of relieving stress in our normal day-to-day lives. For some it may be an extended quiet time of reading, prayer, and worship. Still others exercise may be a stress reliever. Still others it may be working with crafts, fishing, hiking, or simply sitting and reading a book. Encourage your workers to continue to do whatever it is that they did to relieve stress before the disaster. In addition, promote these other stress relievers to your workers:

- Be thankful
- Sing praises out loud
- Spend time in the Word
- Spend time in prayer
- Eat healthy
- Get some exercise
- Get plenty of rest
- Don't overdo caffeine
- Don't overdo alcohol beverages
- Spend time with family members

Counseling the Hurting

Recognizing someone in trouble is the first step to helping them. Consider a questionnaire that asks if the person has experienced any of the signs and symptoms listed above. If a worker marks yes, then intervention should take place. It is believed that early intervention after a traumatic event will help prevent post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). At this time, keep in mind that this is not to counsel the hurting, but more like psychological first aid.

Before any attempt to talk or help a person, pray and ask the Holy Spirit to fill you and give you wisdom:

- Take that person aside in a quiet place (away from the current environment and stressors).
- Establish a rapport that encourages a safe environment.
- Begin with an easy, open-ended question such as “How are you holding up?”
- Be patient as the person may hesitate to share their thoughts and feelings.
- Allow the person to share the event and personal reactions.
- Ask open-ended questions to encourage the person to talk about their concerns.
- Allow them to vent, cry, or even just to sit quietly.
- Be aware, they may display some anger (do not remain in a dangerous situation).
- Be empathetic, let them know you understand.
- Listen to them, do not allow yourself to be distracted.
- Paraphrase what you are hearing back to them to let them know you are listening.
- Do not judge or criticize what the person shares.
- Tell the person that what they are experiencing is normal.
- Do not rush the person.
- Pay close attention to identifying any indications of self-inflictive harmful behavior.
- Encourage the person that they are not at fault if they feel guilty that they survived the pandemic.
- Share scriptures, especially promises from the Bible that the Lord has not forsaken them. See sample scriptures at the end of this section.
- Perhaps having books or tracts available to hand out that would help a person work through their crisis.
- Be sure to pray with the person, as well as promise to continue to pray for them.
- Encourage the person to follow up with someone that can spend time with them or refer them to someone in the community that can spend time. If necessary, schedule an appointment with a professional

- Schedule a time for the two of you to follow up.

As much as physical care for the sick is important, care for the well-being of the workers is essential. Dependent on the severity of the event, the reactions may take root more easily. Early intervention and follow up can make a vast difference to the person. Be aware that influenza will not be the only stressor in this event, and that such a time may try the faith of even the strongest believers.

Bible Promises for Trying Times

Deuteronomy 31:8 *“The LORD is the one who goes ahead of you; He will be with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.”*

Joshua 1:9 - *“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”*

Nehemiah 8:10 – *“Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”*

Psalms 3:3-4 – *“But You, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the One who lifts my head. I was crying to the LORD with my voice, and He answered me from His holy mountain.”*

Psalms 28:7 - *“The LORD is my strength and my shield; My heart trusts in Him, and I am helped; Therefore, my heart exults, and with my song I shall thank Him.”*

Psalms 32:7 - *“You are my hiding place; You preserve me from trouble; You surround me with songs of deliverance.”*

Psalms 34:17-19 - *“The righteous cry, and the LORD hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles. The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all.”*

Psalms 46:8-11 - *“Come, behold the works of the LORD, Who has wrought desolations in the earth. He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariots with fire. ‘Cease striving and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth.’ The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our stronghold.”*

Psalms 50:15 - *“Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me.”*

Proverbs 3:5 - *“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding.”*

Isaiah 26:3-4 - *“The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in You. Trust in the LORD forever, for in GOD the LORD, we have an everlasting Rock.”*

Isaiah 30:15 - *“For thus the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel has said, in repentance and rest you will be saved, in quietness and trust is your strength.”*

Isaiah 40:31 - *“Yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.”*

Isaiah 41:10 - *“Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.”*

Isaiah 43:2 - *“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, nor will the flame burn you.”*

Isaiah 54:10 - *“‘For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, but My lovingkindness will not be removed from you, and My covenant of peace will not be shaken,’ says the Lord who has compassion on you.”*

Matthew 19:26 - *“And looking at them Jesus said to them, ‘With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.’”*

John 16:33 - *“These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”*

Romans 5:2-5 - *“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God. And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”*

Romans 8:18-25 - *“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.”*

Romans 15:4 - *“For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we*

might have hope. Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

2 Corinthians 1:9-10 - *“Indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead; who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us.”*

2 Corinthians 4:17 - *“Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”*

2 Corinthians 12:9 - *“And He has said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.’ Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.”*

Colossians 1:13 - *“For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.”*

Philippians 4:13 - *“I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”*

James 1:2-4 - *“Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”*

James 1:12 - *“Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”*

James 5:10-11 - *“As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord’s dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.”*

1 Peter 5:7 - *“Cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.”*