

**Parish Pandemic Plan of
St. Aidan's Episcopal Church
Alpharetta, GA
April 25, 2006**

We have learned in recent years that disaster can strike at almost any time in many ways—hurricane, tornado, flood. Being prepared for these and other types of disaster has become a matter of awareness and common sense. As you read this Parish Plan, you will see that we encourage people to put a pandemic on the list of possible disasters.

The threat of a pandemic has been discussed in the news and in national and state governments, and we believe it is wise to discuss and prepare as a parish, too.

There is no way to predict when a pandemic or another disaster will occur, but recently there has been much discussion about the rising threat of a pandemic or global epidemic. On November 1, 2005 the President announced the national HHS Pandemic Influenza Plan, relating to the spread of the "Bird Flu." That Plan is available at www.pandemicflu.gov.

We can pray that a pandemic will not occur. We can also pray for a late arrival and a weak strain of the virus. However, the prudent thing to do is prepare ourselves should the virus mutate to humans resulting in a global pandemic. With Atlanta having the busiest airport in the world, we will most likely be one of the first large metropolitan areas affected by a pandemic.

"The first line of defense against a pandemic flu outbreak in (GA) is – you." 1

Brief History

An influenza pandemic has the potential to cause more death and illness than any other public health threat in the last century. The US has suffered tremendous loss in the last pandemics (500,000+ in 1918-1919, 70,000 in 1957-1958, and 34,000 in 1968-1969, and there were many more deaths worldwide). Predictions for the next pandemic suggest that 25-35% of the population could develop clinical disease and a substantial fraction of these individuals could die. Illness rates are estimated at 40% for school-aged children and 20% for working adults.

The H5N1 **avian bird flu** virus is spreading widely and rapidly in domestic and migratory birds across Asia, Europe, and Africa, but it has not reached human-to-human status yet. As of February 2006, this strain has still infected more than 170 people who touched infected birds and killed approximately 100 of them. If and when the virus mutates to become capable of spreading efficiently from human-to-human, there will be a pandemic.

The human-to-human pandemic may hit with little warning, affecting a large number of people within a short period of time. It may hit hard and fast. Widespread illness in the nation and the local community may lead to shortages in the health care sector as well as in essential services. **Effective local response will depend on a well-**

informed public that understands the dangers of a pandemic flu and accepts the need for control measures, like self-isolation and quarantine that prevent disease spread by reducing social contact.

Clinical Facts

- The flu has a 2-4 day incubation period. It moves fast.
- Infected persons can shed virus and transmit infection for one-half to one day before onset of illness.
- Viral shedding is greatest during the first two days of illness.
- The virus can remain infectious for as long as six days on a doorknob!
- Typically there are 2 two-month outbreak waves spaced 2-9 months apart.
- There is no immunity and no vaccine.

Vaccine

At present, in birds, H5N1 is a major shift in the flu virus, so there is no immunity to it and no vaccine currently available. It will take months to develop a vaccine for the new H5N1 person-to-person virus. With only one vaccine production plant in the U.S., the process of vaccination is even more difficult. Since H5N1 is a major shift in the virus type, vaccination will require two shots one month apart. A prototype avian flu vaccine is in clinical trials, but it is not known whether it will be successful against a new mutated human-to-human strain of the virus.

Drugs

Tamiflu (oseltamivir) 75 mg capsules is the antiviral drug of choice. It is not a vaccine. It requires a prescription. The latest recommendation is 4 capsules for 8 days. The prescription should be started by the second day of symptoms.

Physicians in the US have been advised to prescribe Tamiflu **ONLY** when a person has the flu and needs medication, versus prescribing the drug for safekeeping by consumers to use if needed, creating an artificial demand and shortage.

Unfortunately the U.S. currently has only 5 million courses of Tamiflu on hand. Plans are to buy enough to treat 25% of the population. With only one production plant in the world, it could be years before the 25% order is filled. States will create and maintain local stockpiles of the drug.

Safeguards should a pandemic occur

1. Increase social distance.
2. Use gloves and masks when out in public or when handling mail.
3. Minimize social contact:
 - The best way to remain safe during a pandemic is to limit exposure to other people.
 - All family members should stay at home as much as possible, avoiding unnecessary trips and contact with others.

The National “Trigger”

The National Pandemic Influenza Plan states, “Sustained person-to-person transmission anywhere in the world will be the triggering event to initiate a pandemic response by the U.S. Because we live in a global community, a human outbreak anywhere means risk everywhere.”

Encouraging Personal Response: Preparedness Forum or Workshop for the Parish

In an effort to be proactive and prepared, as well as to inform, the Disaster Preparedness Committee, which includes Fr. Rob, feel that it would be worthwhile for a program to be offered for parishioners to listen, learn and ask questions about the consequences of a pandemic.

In advance of the program offering, and to create awareness of the subject, this Plan will be put on the St. Aidan’s website, and copies of it and of the CDC’s **Pandemic Flu Planning Checklist** (www.pandemicflu.gov.) will be made available in the Narthex for people to take home and read.

The timing and format of the formal program is yet to be determined. Two local “experts” from the State Health Dept. district that serves Alpharetta that Jerry Hood suggests we contact to be part of a panel discussion are: Al Simmons, Alpharetta Health Dept. (404-730-1409) and Al Wright, Emergency Preparedness Specialist (404-730-1285).

Personal Preparation – items to be reviewed as part of an educational offering to the congregation about “being prepared”

Flu shot - Get vaccinated with a flu shot. The current vaccine offers no specific protection against H5N1 avian bird flu, but it will help keep your body as strong as possible, improving your odds of survival in case you get the bird flu.

Pneumonia shot - pneumonia is a frequent complication of the flu. Consult with your physician about getting pneumonia shot now.

Hand hygiene - single most important practice. Wash hands often. Wash at least 20 seconds in soapy water- sing happy birthday twice, once to each hand. Hand hygiene includes alcohol-based products (gels, rinses, foams) containing an emollient that do not require the use of water.

Gloves - use disposable gloves for mail, newspaper, pumping gas, grocery shopping. Wash hands after glove removal.

Masks - N95 respirator masks are recommended. They may not be in the pharmacy, but you can find them in hardware and paint depts. They are one use, disposable. Wash hands after discarding used mask. Surgical masks will help prevent infection.

Use trash liner bags to put on the street so you don't have to touch the garbage can.

Stockpile emergency rations. There will likely be a run on supermarkets at the first sign of a pandemic. Maintain 3-12 months worth of canned foods and supplies so you don't have to leave home. See www.pandemicflu.gov for a list of supplies.

Handling the deceased at home -- need guidance from the Health Dept.

As at all times, have an updated will. Remember the parish and .7 to ERD.

Pray for strength and courage to love and serve the Lord.

St. Aidan's Response

All people need to become educated about a potential pandemic, so that if and when human-to-human transmission begins occurring, they can make informed decisions, such as canceling domestic and foreign travel, start working from home, etc. At the same time and hopefully before it is too late, public health departments will begin publicizing actions to be taken.

We all need to make our own decisions in how to best protect ourselves. St. Aidan's leadership is in a position to share information and establish an emergency operational plan in the event a pandemic does occur. This document and the following information is a first step in that direction.

Following the first person-to-person confirmed cases of H5N1 in the US, St. Aidan's services and gatherings, as well as staff working from home versus the church office, will be at the discretion of the Rector. Communications will occur via the Parish email list maintained by the Parish Administrator, the St. Aidan's website, and personal phone calls.

An example of an early and precautionary change in schedule, at the discretion of the Rector, could be canceling of all Sunday programs but holding Morning Prayer outdoors. This would allow a community gathering but allows space between participants. There would be no physical contact with one another and no peace exchanged in our traditional manner. People may choose to wear masks. (Parents bringing children would be responsible for keeping their children confined and avoiding any contact with other children or adults.)

Informed and aware of the risks, parishioners will have to make individual choices in their response to those in need. There would basically be two choices to make – that of a “hibernating household” or a “Helping household”.

- Hibernators would be able to use their phones and email to track what is going on with people in the parish and sharing that information.
- Helpers would be people willing to prepare and deliver meals and/or supplies to those in need, both within the parish and the wider community, utilizing all preventative measures such as gloves, masks, etc. when outside their home.

Both groups would be able to offer prayer and emotional support to parishioners and anyone in need.

Another opportunity afforded by a quarantine situation will be for families to become closer and to have more time for family Bible study, using the Book of Common Prayer and other devotional time.

Other considerations for the Rector and Vestry:

There will be a role for faith-based organizations to assist or provide services to persons in isolation and quarantine. See FBO guidance at www.pandemicflu.gov.

If a decision to discontinue services were made, a banner could be placed at the entrance reading “Services discontinued until further notice. For assistance, call 770-521-0207 or check www.staidans.org”

Weddings and baptisms would be rescheduled.

Funerals would be held at the discretion of the Rector – attendees should wear gloves and masks.

Pledges may be kept current by being mailed to the church office or with direct deposit.

Church office staff might be asked to work from home or at www.mypc.com during a pandemic, using all necessary precautions.

St. Aidan’s Web site - announcements, updates, devotions, etc. will be posted.

Conference calls - groups such as Bible Study, DOK, AA and the Monday men’s discussion group will meet at their regular times via conference call.

Telephone chains - groups such as the vestry, men's breakfast teams, foyers, hikers, DOK, etc will be encouraged to call each other on a regular basis for support and fellowship.

Parish Area Care (PAC) Groups

If a pandemic occurs, an organized process of keeping track of one another will be critical. One way to accomplish this would be to first divide the congregation on paper into geographical PAC Groups. These would be done first by zip code and then by neighborhoods in close proximity.

Each PAC group would have between 6 – 12 family units in the PAC. Each PAC would have a coordinator who would be responsible for communications.

The Vestry could be assigned responsibility for two or three PAC groups with the coordinators reporting to a Vestry person. Again, communications would be via phone or email.

If widespread illness and death occur, this would offer a way to keep everyone feeling a part of the whole. PACs would be responsible for communicating regularly with one another, and the Helpers within the PAC would be able to take food to those ill, having a death in the family, etc. following all published precautions and guidelines.

The PAC concept is all for consideration and discussion only. However, even in a healthy environment, PAC groups are worth considering as another means of establishing a sense of belonging and knowing ones neighbors who are part of the same church family. In the absence of a pandemic, PAC groups could also be encouraged to meet once or twice a year for pot luck so that all the members would get to know one another. They might also be encouraged to come up with a name for their PAC to help identify their own PAC and its geographical location.

Conclusion:

We have learned in the past years that disaster strikes without much warning but with the potential of wide-spread destruction. We hope and pray that the predicted disaster of Avian Flu will not occur, but we can't keep our head in the sand about the historical cycles of pandemic that occur in the world. We hope this plan helps us all to stay well and help others in need if and when a pandemic occurs.

Sincerely,

Members of the Disaster Preparedness Committee:

Elwyn Alexander
Dr. Ruth Clemens
Jerry Hood
Carole Maddux

Theo Manos
Julie Michelitch
Clark Miller
Fr. Rob Wood

References

www.pandemicflu.gov - HHS Pandemic Influenza Plan 11-1-2005

<http://health.state.ga.us> - Georgia Pandemic Influenza Plan Oct. 2005

www.thepoultrysite.com - latest news updates from around the world

CIDRAP - Center for Infectious Disease and Policy
Dr Michael Osterholm's center in Minneapolis "12-18 month global blizzard"
www.cidrap.umn.edu/cidrap/influenza/avianflu

Effect Measure Blog - Progressive public health discussion
www.effectmeasure.blogspot.com

<http://fluwikie.com> Flu Wikie

Nature magazine - May 26, 2005 - editorial and 3 page scenario of pandemic

PBS News Hour - May 26, 2005
Guest - Anthony Fauci, Dir. National Institute of Allergy & Infectious Diseases
http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/health/jan-june05/flu_5-26.html

"We'll have a problem *soon*. We *will* have a pandemic... maybe this year."

Foreign Affairs Journal - July 2005 esp. Michael Osterholm piece

The Great Influenza by John Barry re 1918 "Spanish" flu pandemic from Kansas

1 Readiness Key to Avian Flu, Denver Post, 4/17/06 www.denverpost.com

Original draft prepared by Jerry Hood. Revised and edited by St. Aidan's Disaster Planning Committee for presentation to St. Aidan's Vestry. Adopted by St. Aidan's Vestry on April 25, 2006.