

SWINE FLU GUIDANCE

Update August 2009

Swine flu is spread by droplets that come from the nose and mouth when a person sneezes. These droplets stick to surfaces and can remain infectious for some time.

In response to queries from local churches, recommendations have been made to reduce the risk of spreading these droplets during common church activities. Each church is different and individual ministers may wish to consider further ways in which the risk of spreading the disease could reasonably be reduced.

Holy Communion

For the period of the pandemic, we recommend that:

- a common cup should not be used
- intinction (dipping bread in wine) should not be practised as it can carry unnecessarily high levels of risk
- individual communion vessels should be carefully cleaned (this is crucial)
- those handling the vessels and the bread should use an antibacterial gel on their hands before taking part in Communion
- when using individual cups, the cups should be handed directly to communicants, not passed between them
- bread should not be passed from one communicant to another.

Where there are clear pastoral reasons for doing so, giving Holy Communion 'in one kind' (using only bread or wine) is also acceptable practice within the Methodist Church.

Sharing in the Peace and other greetings

During worship services and gatherings, it is common for people to share a sign of Christ's peace with one another, often through handshaking or hugging. Where there appears to be a significantly increased risk of infection, such as when members of the congregation have recently come into contact with people with swine flu, we recommend that people refrain from

physical expressions of the Peace. The usual practice of shaking hands when greeting each other on arriving at church, or saying goodbye after the meeting, should also be reconsidered in these circumstances.

Church facilities

Think about the cleanliness and accessibility of your church facilities.

- Are tissues and bins easily accessible?
- Are the contents of such bins disposed of regularly and hygienically?
- Are the hand washing facilities satisfactory?
- Could you provide sanitising gel in addition to soap?
- If you serve drinks or food on church premises, are you following all the recommendations in the food hygiene certificate to reduce cross-infection?

Supporting those with swine flu

Please check that people with the virus have a designated 'flu friend' – a healthy friend or relative who can collect antiviral or other required medication, as well as delivering essential supplies whilst the sufferer is restricted to their home.

Where it is inadvisable to visit people in person, regular contact by phone, email or other means may prove invaluable for those isolated by the virus.

Those wishing to share in worship but are restricted to their home may wish to attend an online worship service at St Pixels, the online church, or share in worship broadcast on the radio, such as the Daily Service on Radio 4 longwave, each weekday at 9.45am. For more information, visit www.stpixels.com or www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b006wzfs.

Please pray...

- for the NHS
- for the pharmaceutical industry working to produce vaccinations
- for victims in developing countries
- for those with underlying health problems
- for those caring for the sick.

