

Presbytery of Elizabeth DPRC: Preparation Fact Sheet

“How Can Churches Help In the Community Response to an Ebola Outbreak?”

B. Understanding the truths about the disease:

1. Someone must currently be ill and expressing symptoms to be contagious.
2. Then, it is transmitted by contact with bodily fluids, either to a mucus membrane or through an open cut.
3. The virus invades multiple organ systems throughout the body. It causes fever, stomach pain, nausea, vomiting, muscle aches, liver and kidney pain, bleeding, and steep drops in blood pressure.
4. Patients lose 5 to 10 liters of fluid per day.
5. Treatment is basically supportive, in the ICU to isolate the patient, IV fluids, oxygen, meds to support low blood pressure as needed, and nutrition until the patient's immune response can mount a defense.
6. The CDC's main response and deployment is in West Africa. The reasons for this are
 - a. For reasons of basic human compassion,
 - b. By controlling the epidemic at its source, fewer cases will spread here.

WRONG INFORMATION:

1. That Ebola is airborne, like the flu-which it is not.
2. That Ebola is uncontrollable-the disease has been the “curse” of many apocalyptic movies and books, creating a culture of heightened fear that is simply not true.
3. It can present simply like the flu or a common cold. It is more virulent than that.
4. It is an STD. It can be transmitted sexually, BUT the patient must currently be ill and expressing symptoms-not a likely scenario for intimacy.
5. Antibiotics are NOT effective against the virus.

This Fact Sheet summarizes information provided by the CDC on their website and in a conference call to Faith Based Organizations for Ebola Preparations in the United States held on Oct. 22, 2014. Rev. Peter Hofstra, Middlesex County Representative to the Elizabeth Presbytery Disaster Preparedness and Response Commission, and OEM Chaplain in Middlesex County, participated in the conference call. For questions or follow up, please contact Rev. Hofstra at pastorpeter@fpcperthamboy.org.

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A. Strategies for Pastors and Churches to Consider:

1. ***Overcome fear with facts!*** We can use our positions of authority and trust to help decrease fear by educating the people in our communities about this disease. See the Fact Sheet on the rear. More info is on the CDC website.
2. ***Overcome stigmatization with compassion!*** Decrease the stigma about the disease.
 - a. Some people in contact with the patient who needed to be tracked by authorities were afraid to go outside because of threats from ‘healthy’ neighbors.
 - b. Some people who ‘seemed’ to come from West Africa, due to assumptions about color, language, or culture, were targeted by ‘healthy’ residents of their community.
3. ***Overcome isolation with preparation!***
 - a. Mobilize local charitable organizations to be ready to provide food and resources to people who have to be isolated.
 - b. Prepare these networks ahead of time as valuable partners in ANY kind of crisis or disaster, reinforcing the connections between the faith and charitable organizations.
4. ***Overcome apathy with good habits!*** Reinforcement of general principles of good health
 - a. Getting flu shots to make sure immune systems are fully supported.
 - b. Proper hand-washing
 - c. Staying home if ill, i.e. cold, flu, stomach bug.
5. ***Overcome hyperbole with reality!***
 - a. Story: Trainings for Ebola treatment seem to indicate lots of people will be prepared.
 - i. Reality: VERY limited number of people in direct care of patients; families and faith leaders DO NOT need the training.
 - b. Story: Religious groups claiming Ebola is judgment.
 - i. Reality-faith side: Such voices do not reflect the good of God or God’s people.
 - ii. Reality-illness side: It is a disease and truly a very poor choice for divine intervention given how it is transmitted and the controls set in motion.
 - c. Story: Ebola is in America
 - i. Reality: Very limited number of cases, incredibly well prepared containment strategy.
6. ***Overcome our insularity by stepping into the public sphere.***
 - a. Values and ethics are important in faith based organizations, what are intrinsic values that be brought to bear? Compassion? Love?
 - b. Common themes and narratives can be tapped in our belief systems to understand and provide support.