

HOW CAN THE CHURCH RESPOND TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS

March 27, 2020

6 ways to mobilize your church to show Jesus' heart to your community.

When disasters strike across Canada, Samaritan's Purse steps in to help by partnering with local churches. Together, we minister to Canadians impacted by floods and fires, hurricanes and tornados—and now, those impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic too.

Our ministry staff are available to support your church, to encourage you to share the love of Jesus Christ with people facing fear and uncertainty. Visit our Church Resources page for links and resources, connect with other church leaders in our Facebook group, or contact one of our staff members at canadianrelief@samaritan.ca. Our experience has taught us that it's during times of crisis like this that meaningful partnerships can be forged between churches and their communities.



So how can the Church respond to the COVID-19 crisis in a way that is helpful now, and positions it as a relevant resource that communities can and will access in future times of need?

6 WAYS TO MOBILIZE YOUR CHURCH

Here are six ideas about how to mobilize your church to show Jesus' heart to your community:

1. Stay healthy so you can help

Getting infected with COVID-19 is a real risk—as well as coming down with any number of other illnesses during the cold and flu season. Set the example in how to stay healthy.

- Provide accurate information to your congregation about how to reduce the risk of infection
- Practice appropriate social distancing
- Reduce face-to-face gatherings
- Disinfect commonly touched areas
- Practice self care

2. Gather a leadership team

Invite members of your congregation to form a leadership team. Together, this team will prepare a ministry plan for how your church can best serve the community.

- Include individuals with special skills, such as those with a health or leadership background
- Assign specific roles and tasks
- If possible, plan for back-up in case anyone on the team gets sick



3. Make an inventory of your church's strengths and resources

An inventory like this not only acknowledges God's gifts to your church particularly, but also guides the creation of your ministry plan. It is also a source of hope and optimism in times of challenge. Here are some items to consider:

- The physical space and structure of your church building
- Tools and equipment on hand
- Special skills and availability of members of the congregation
- Specific ministries that can be leveraged in new ways to serve the community
- Connections with individuals, groups, churches, and organizations in the community
- Available community resources (community associations, volunteer organizations, etc.)

4. Monitor for changes in needs

Every disaster produces new and unexpected needs that don't always fit the mandates of existing helping organizations. As a result, certain needs can remain unmet, or individuals can fall through the cracks. Needs also tend to change over time.

- Determine who are the most vulnerable in your community
- What are the unmet needs in the community (including church members)
- Find out if there are gaps in resources
- Prioritize needs to be addressed
- Determine who is best to address these needs
- Monitor changes in needs as time passes

5. Develop partnerships and participate in coalitions

Working together is of utmost importance. Find out what other helpers are doing in order to avoid duplication of work and to best address unmet needs. Don't work for the community—work with the community. Partnerships allow you to learn from the experience of others and can help prevent your church from being overwhelmed or unduly burdened with the response. Some potential partners include:

- Neighbourhood level organizations
- Ministerials (often consists of the more active churches in a community)
- Helping agencies, non-government organizations
- Municipal leaders
- Store owners

6. Make a community plan

- Develop an overall ministry goal. What do you want your ministry to accomplish in the community?
- Break each goal into clear action items: who does what, when, where, and how
- Set priorities. You can't do everything for everyone. Some gaps may not need to be addressed right now
- Make sure to pay attention to vulnerabilities: those with compromised health, those who are home-bound, people with disabilities, the elderly, individuals who have been laid off or are on low income, etc.
- Include a communication plan: How will you share information and who will check in with those who are vulnerable or need reassurance.

The Church is its people. Today, “love your neighbor” needs a literal interpretation (Matthew 22:39, ESV). Church members are often spread throughout many neighborhoods—get to know your neighbors and work together to care for one another. Active “neighboring” is one of the best ways to be the Church to those around us.

