

Ebola checklist for pastors and other church leaders

This resource is provided for churches and organizations to use in responding to the Ebola outbreak. The messages provide important health information as well as affirmations of God's love even in the most difficult times. The messages are designed for distribution via SMS texting, but can also be adapted for use in social media, newsletters and other channels.

Words of comfort from the Bible

- “Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go ... for I will not leave you.” (Genesis 28:15a, NRSV)
- “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.” (Exodus 33:14b, NRSV)
- “God bless you and keep you, God smile on you and gift you, God look you full in the face and make you prosper.” (Numbers 6:24-26, The Message)
- “As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you.” (Joshua 1:5b, NRSV)
- “Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff ... comfort me.” (Psalm 23:4, NRSV)
- “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? ... For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will set me high on a rock.” (Psalm 27:1, 5, NRSV)
- “Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him.” (Psalm 42:11a, NRSV)
- “In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I am not afraid; what can flesh do to me?” (Psalm 56:4, NRSV)
- “Hear my prayer, O Lord; let my cry come to you. Do not hide your face from me in the day of my distress. Incline your ear to me; answer me speedily in the day when I call.” (Psalm 102:1-2, NRSV)
- “For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven ... a time to mourn, and a time to dance.” (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 4b, NRSV)
- “Do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you. I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.” (Isaiah 41:10, NRSV)
- “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you. When you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. ... You are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you. ... Do not fear, for I am with you.” (Isaiah 43:1b-2, 4-5a, NRSV)
- “For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare ... to give you a future with hope.” (Jeremiah 29:11, NRSV)
- “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” (Matthew 5:4, NRSV)

- “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28, NRSV)
- “And hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit.” (Romans 5:5a, NRSV)
- “Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer.” (Romans 12:11-12, NRSV)
- “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by ... the Holy Spirit.” (Romans 15:13, NRSV)
- “[Love] bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” (1 Corinthians 13:7, NRSV)
- “Keep alert, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.” (1 Corinthians 16:13-14, NRSV)
- “We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken. ... So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day.” (2 Corinthians 4:8-9a, 16, NRSV)
- “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” (2 Corinthians 12:9b, NRSV)
- “Do not worry ... in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6-7, NRSV)
- “Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving.” (Colossians 4:2, NRSV)
- “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks ... this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, NRSV)
- “Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help.” (Hebrews 4:16a, NRSV)
- “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1, NRSV)

Words of hope from The Upper Room

Here are brief prayers:

- God of compassion, with you and your children, we weep. Comfort all who have no one to weep for them. Amen.
- God, our healer, teach us to focus on hope. Prepare us for eternal glory, even when fear and disease overcome us. Amen.

- Loving God, bless those who give their lives caring for others. Grant them strength and comfort in their ministry. Amen.
- Loving God, give us a spirit of openness to embrace your children. Help us to care for them and show your love. Amen.
- Loving God, help us never to lose heart. We know that the same God who raised Jesus Christ will raise us up, no matter what afflictions we go through. Amen.
- Loving God, let us be your heart reaching out to those who grieve. Let us be your hands assisting those who still live. Amen.
- Loving God, thank you for Christ's healing love. Help us to respond with Christ's compassion that leads us to see, listen and touch. Amen.
- Loving God, you are our strength. Remind us that you are always present and never overlook our suffering. Respond when we cry. Amen.
- Loving God, you call us to act with loving kindness and without judgment. Help us to show the love of Christ in all we do. Amen.
- Loving God, you stand with the least and the lost. Enter all the places that need your comforting and healing presence. Amen.
- Loving God, your presence gives us light and hope in the darkest nights. You are with us always. Thank you! Amen.

Ebola precautionary tips for the church

- During worship, instead of shaking hands, hugging or passing the peace, nod heads, bow toward one another or cross your hands over your heart as a sign of peace.
- Make sure Communion servers thoroughly wash hands. Before worship, break bread into small pieces. During worship, dip pieces in grape juice and place them in partakers' hands. If feasible, use disposable cups for Communion and NEVER reuse them.
- For baptisms, use clean, fresh water and sprinkle the water over the head of the person being baptized. Dispose of the water immediately.
- During rituals that traditionally involve laying on of hands, offer a blessing and the sign of the cross without touching.
- After worship, clean hymnals, Bibles, pews and other surfaces with disinfectant to avoid spreading germs.
- Learn about Ebola containment measures, including burial of the dead. Promptly and safely, bury people who have died. Make parishioners aware of the risks of contagion from practices such as traditional washing of the dead.
- Hold burial or cremation soon after death at a site near the place of death with limits placed on the size of any gathering.
- After each use, disinfect any vehicles used to transport bodies to burial or cremation sites.

Ebola precautionary tips for the home

- Reduce wildlife-to-human transmission of Ebola via infected fruit bats/monkeys/apes and consumption of their raw meat.
- Avoid contact with bats and nonhuman primates or blood, fluids and raw meat prepared from these animals.
- Wear protective clothing when handling animals. Thoroughly cook animal products (blood and meat) before eating.
- If you are exposed to surfaces covered in infected bat droppings, do not touch your eyes or mouth. Wash your hands immediately.
- Never eat food on which bats have drooled or defecated.
- Practice careful hygiene. Reduce risk of human-to-human transmission of Ebola through direct contact with infected patients, especially by bodily fluids.
- Wear gloves and protective equipment when caring for sick family members. The infection may be transmitted if an infected person's blood or vomit gets into a person's eyes, nose or mouth.
- Do not handle items that may have touched an infected person's blood or body fluids; discard these objects. Used latex gloves and hypodermic needles may spread the disease.
- If an Ebola patient dies, avoid direct contact with the body.
- During epidemics, avoid public gatherings. Stay at home. Heed emergency health messages through texting and other media.

Ebola precautionary tips for the community

- Isolate Ebola patients from other sick people.
- Remind health-care workers to wear protective clothing and use infection-control measures. Train them to use and decontaminate protective gear correctly.
- Do not stigmatize, ostracize or insult health-care volunteers who risk their lives for the sake of others. Show respect and gratitude.
- To neutralize the virus, if soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand rubs containing at least 60% alcohol.
- Rather than disinfecting with lime, which has a limited effect on pathogens, use chlorine solution or other medical disinfectants.
- Ignore rumors such as "Simply saying 'Ebola' aloud transmits the disease." That is false!
- Wash hands thoroughly after visiting Ebola-infected patients in the hospital.
- Where possible, in the case of a medical epidemic, leave body handling to specialist medical staff.



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United Methodist Communications

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Sources: Centers for Disease Control, General Board of Discipleship/The Upper Room, International Red Cross, Mayo Clinic, UNICEF, USAid, World Health Organization



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