



## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** October 2, 2020  
**TO:** Religious & Cultural Leaders of San Francisco's Houses of Worship  
**RE:** Making the decision to resume indoor gatherings during the COVID pandemic

---

We are committed to providing you with current information to help communities of faith reduce risk of spreading COVID-19. As of Sept 30, 2020, California State and San Francisco Health Officer orders authorized indoor religious worship. **However, it may not yet be safe for you to do so.**

### **The risk of transmitting COVID-19 is MUCH greater indoors.**

The COVID-19 virus can travel in the air more than 6 feet and builds up indoors.

You must consider the increased risk to yourself and your congregation.

The risk involved in gathering involves not only personal risk but also an increased risk of community transmission of COVID-19 that may extend far beyond those who participate in the gathering.

COVID-19 is thought to spread when:

- a person breathes, talks, sings, coughs, or sneezes and releases small infectious particles which can remain in the air for a period of time, particularly indoors, and can move beyond 6 feet on indoor air currents (aerosol transmission),
- a person touches a surface that is contaminated and then touches a mucus membrane such as their nose, eyes, or mouth (contact transmission), or
- large droplets from coughing and sneezing are propelled directly into the face, nose, eyes, or mouth of someone nearby, usually within 6 feet (droplet transmission).

### **To make indoor worship as safe as possible ...**

- **Don't rush.** Make sure you have your [Health and Safety Plan](#) in place and are able to implement the plan **before** starting indoor activities. Plans have multiple elements, including capacity limits, **requirements** for signage (<https://sf.gov/outreach-toolkit-coronavirus-covid-19>), social distancing arrangements, masking, prohibition on singing or chanting, screening those who enter ([www.sfdcp.org/screen](http://www.sfdcp.org/screen)), and other critical elements. See [www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/covid-guidance/2020-34-HSP-Indoor-Worship.pdf](http://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/covid-guidance/2020-34-HSP-Indoor-Worship.pdf) for the Health and Safety Plan.
- **Adequate ventilation** is a critical element because virus particles build up indoors. If you cannot optimize ventilation according to [www.sfdcp.org/COVID-ventilation](http://www.sfdcp.org/COVID-ventilation) because of circumstances such as a poorly functioning HVAC system or poor air quality leading to the closing of windows, we recommend closing indoor worship – use virtual or outdoor settings until ventilation issues are resolved.

### **Develop a Plan to ensure the safety and spiritual health of your congregation or spiritual community**

Your place of worship **must** have an adequate [Health and Safety Plan](#) in place and implemented **before** gathering indoors to prevent and reduce transmission of COVID-19. If your place of worship does not have a Plan, continue to hold outdoor gatherings or virtual services until the Health and Safety Plan is implemented.

Use these [Best Practices](#) to make the Plan (Best Practices and this memo are at [www.sfdcp.org/safersocial](http://www.sfdcp.org/safersocial))

To find more detailed information on how to make your house of worship safer, follow Health Officer Directive No. 2020-34, Exhibit A No. 2020-34 and guidance at: [www.sfdcp.org/safersocial](http://www.sfdcp.org/safersocial).

Email [Faith-basedsites@sfdph.org](mailto:Faith-basedsites@sfdph.org), if you would like assistance with your [Plan](#) **before opening for indoor worship.**