

**JOINT PROTOCOL
FOR A REOPENING
PLACE OF WORSHIP SAFTLY
IN QUEBEC**

JUNE 4th JUIN 2020¹

Context and guidelines

Places of worship are currently closed in Quebec, following government directives to stem the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it is possible to gather outside as long as different measures are respected (in a private outdoor area with a maximum of 10 people and a minimum distance of 2 metres between people). Except in exceptional cases, indoor gatherings remain prohibited.

The reopening of places of worship will be done gradually, as soon as the authorities allow it. It will be carried out in several phases if the situation so requires. During this reopening, we are committed to applying the following guidelines, which are in line with World Health Organization guidelines and Quebec's public health recommendations, the latter being preferential. We are also committed to adjusting our protocol in accordance with future public health guidelines.

These guidelines are applicable to most places of worship. They will serve as a guide for adapting the religious services to make them safe for participants and their fellow citizens. If necessary, the appropriate religious authorities will develop additional measures adapted to local needs and buildings. These specific protocols will be transmitted to the authorities on request.

The guidelines cover the layout of the site, access rules, rules that apply during activities and a few additional points. Each is the subject of a statement and is followed, where appropriate, by comments.

¹ Mise à jour du document du 8 mai 2020. Les modifications intègrent les commentaires du MSSSQ du 3 juin 2020.

Layout of the place of worship

1. Post a notice at the entrances to the place of worship indicating the maximum capacity, access conditions and health rules in force.
 - Government posters will be used when available.
2. Make sure that the place of worship is well cleaned between each use and is properly ventilated.
 - Cleaning. Refer to INSPQ cleaning procedures:
<https://www.inspq.qc.ca/en/covid-19/environment/surface-cleaning>
The cleaning products to be used are those approved by Health Canada:
<https://www.canada.ca/fr/sante-canada/services/medicaments-produits-sante/desinfectants/covid-19/liste.html>
 - Ventilation. If there is mechanical ventilation, be sure to clean the filters. The doors of the place of worship could also be left open between services to allow ventilation. The INSPQ's recommendations for ventilation in health care settings will be useful: <https://www.inspq.qc.ca/publications/3011-climatiseurs-mobiles-ventilateurs-milieus-soin-covid19>
3. Provide a hand-washing station at the entrance to the place of worship and make its use mandatory for all on arrival, under supervision.
 - *Reminder:* Hand washing with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds is preferred, antiseptic gel should only be used when these are not available. The composition of the gels must comply with public health standards.
 - Government published posters will be used:
 - <https://publications.msss.gouv.qc.ca/msss/document-000437/?&date=DESC&sujet=covid-19&critere=sujet>
 - <https://publications.msss.gouv.qc.ca/msss/document>
4. Place disposable tissues within reach and closed containers for used tissues.
 - To avoid contact with hands, open or closed pedal bins are to be preferred.

5. *Remove all common-use booklets and use only, screens or other solutions that do not require the sharing of physical documents.*
 - Provide for electronic distribution in advance if appropriate.

Access to the place of worship

6. Have personnel at the door to enforce conditions of access, regulate the number and flow of people and ensure a safe social distance at all times.
 - If possible, leave the doors open at the beginning and the end.
 - Provide measures for reception and departure that ensure a distance of 2 metres (6 feet) is respected: marked out waiting lines, exit by row, etc.
 - Supervise mandatory hand washing at the entrance.
 - Strongly advise against the use of gloves.
 - Strongly encourage the wearing of a mask or face shield.
7. Prohibit people from attending religious services if they have symptoms or are suspected of having COVID-19, or if they report contact with an infected person.
8. Maintain the number of participants at a maximum of 50% of the capacity of the place of worship or at a smaller percentage necessary to maintain a safe distance (2 meters) between participants.
 - A rotation of admitted worshippers is suggested.
 - Where necessary due to crowding, access to the place of worship could be restricted to a limited number of individuals by reservation, in order to allow the measures put in place to run smoothly before gradually opening up to maximum safe capacity.

Rules within the place of worship

9. Participants in all religious services must remain at least 2 metres from each other at all times; if necessary, signs will be posted and fixed seating will be provided to maintain this distance.

- For example, coloured tape can be used to mark traffic, guide one-way traffic to prevent people from passing each other, etc.
 - People in the same household do not have to respect the 2-metre rule. A section could be reserved for them.
10. Warn participants not to touch each other and avoid any activity involving people touching the same object or passing objects to each other.
- For offerings or collections, avoid monetary exchanges and use alternative means (e.g., electronic donation platforms).
11. A choir ensemble should not be used. If need be, only one singer will perform, at a good distance from the audience. Wearing a visor by this person could be an alternative to a mask.
12. If Communion or the Eucharist is offered, this should be done in complete safety, after consultation with the competent authorities.
13. *If there are activities with the children*, they will be organized and carried out according to the norms on day care centres issued by CNESST.
<https://www.cnesst.gouv.qc.ca/salle-de-presse/covid-19/Pages/outils-secteur-services-garde.aspx>.

Other rules

14. Keep the duration of the gathering to the minimum necessary by reducing ceremonies to the essentials.
15. Whenever possible, broadcast services for people who cannot attend in person.
16. Restrictions apply to washroom facilities: decrease capacity (information to be posted), handwashing signs, main door left open.

17. Cancel any non-essential meetings or gatherings before or after the Services.
Discussion or coffee areas must remain closed .

Strict application of these measures will enable prayer gatherings and religious services to gradually resume in places of worship, thus providing psychological and spiritual support to members of faith communities at this difficult time as they continue to contribute to the common good of the whole society.