

## GUIDELINES FOR 7<sup>TH</sup> LUNAR MONTH ACTIVITIES

This advisory guides religious organisations (ROs) on the permitted activities and required safe management measures, for the conduct of 7<sup>th</sup> lunar month activities in Phase Two. It has been developed by the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY), in consultation with the Singapore Buddhist Federation (SBF) and Taoist Federation (TF). This year's 7<sup>th</sup> lunar month is from 19 August to 16 September 2020.

2. ROs should follow this guidance for their 7<sup>th</sup> lunar month activities, in addition to MCCY's latest advisory on the Resumption of More Religious Activities in Phase Two<sup>1</sup>. In Phase Two, places of worship may **resume congregational and other worship services, for up to 50 persons at a time**. Non-congregational religious activities and religious rites are also permitted in places of worship **for groups of up to 5 persons, subject to a total cap of 50 persons**. Both sets of activities can be held concurrently, subject to safe management measures.

### 7<sup>th</sup> Lunar Month Prayer Services

3. ROs are **allowed to conduct 7<sup>th</sup> lunar month prayer services for up to 50 persons at a time**<sup>2</sup> (excluding religious and supporting workers, which should be kept to a minimum) and must observe the following safe management measures:

- a. Prayer services should be kept to **as short a duration as possible**. Worshippers should leave immediately after performing their prayers. There should be **no mingling** between worshippers before, during or after the prayer service.
- b. Worshippers are to observe **1 metre safe distance** between themselves and others if they are worshipping individually. Worshippers may also worship in groups of no more than 5 persons, with 1 metre safe distancing between groups.
- c. All persons present must **wear a face mask at all times**.<sup>3</sup> Those who are involved in the conduct of the prayer service (e.g. religious leader, priest, or monk) may wear a face shield when performing their speaking duties and must be at least 1 metre away from any other individual.

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<sup>1</sup> MCCY's advisory on the Resumption of More Religious Activities in Phase Two was updated on 2 Aug 2020.

<sup>2</sup> ROs conducting their activities in external venues (i.e. not places of worship), are subject to premise capacity limits stipulated by the premise owner. ROs, which have been approved by MCCY to participate in the pilot for increased worship limits, may accommodate up to 100 persons at any one time for the prayer services.

<sup>3</sup> Children twelve years and below, as well as persons who have health conditions that may result in breathing or other medical difficulties when a mask is worn for a prolonged period of time, may wear a face shield in lieu of a face mask.

- d. **Worshippers can burn incense and joss paper** within the premises that the prayer services are held and should do so responsibly. Worshippers should **leave immediately** after performing their prayers.
- e. **Singing and other live performances are not permitted** during the prayer service. Singing is considered a higher risk activity as it could potentially release a larger amount of droplets.
- f. Premises where the prayer services are held should be well-ventilated. Premises that have reduced air circulation (e.g. air-conditioned prayer hall) should, where possible, open doors and windows to naturally **ventilate the space after use**.
- g. **No receptions or on-site meals are allowed** before or after the prayer service. ROs are **allowed to distribute takeaway meals, pre-packed staple food items and prayer packages to worshippers**. ROs should limit the number of religious workers and staff involved in such distribution, as well as reduce the frequency and duration of direct interactions with worshippers.
- h. The above measures are in addition to existing safe management measures for religious activities in Phase Two.<sup>4</sup>

4. Places of Worship. ROs are allowed to conduct the 7<sup>th</sup> lunar month prayer services in their places of worship. The number of persons attending such prayer services would count towards the existing limit of 50 persons at any one time for worship services in the place of worship.

5. External Venues. 7<sup>th</sup> lunar month prayers can take place in venues outside of places of worship (e.g. HDB common areas, industrial areas) if they are conducted by ROs with a good track record of implementing safe management measures [i.e. have submitted Safe Management Plans (SMPs) for Phase Two activities to MCCY], or by religious workers endorsed by these ROs. Permits and approvals must still be obtained from the premise owners and relevant authorities. ROs that do not have such a track record must first seek the support of the Taoist Federation or the Singapore Buddhist Federation, before their applications to use external venues are considered by the relevant authorities/premise-owners. ROs may set up tentage for the prayer services, subject to approval from relevant agencies. The organisers of the 7<sup>th</sup> lunar month prayers (including the ROs and religious workers involved) should follow the safe management measures stipulated by MCCY for such prayers (paragraph 3) as well as any other conditions stipulated by the premise owner.

### **Other 7<sup>th</sup> Lunar Month Activities**

6. Columbaria. ROs can continue to **allow the customary visits to columbaria** in their places of worship if the columbaria has already been permitted to operate in Phase Two.

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<sup>4</sup> Existing safe management measures include mandatory temperature taking and registration, frequent cleaning of premises, and no sharing of prayer items.

- a. **Individuals who visit the columbaria must maintain a safe distance of at least 1 metre at all times. Families who visit the columbaria in groups are limited to no more than 5 persons in a group.** There should be at least 1 metre safe distancing between groups and no mingling between groups. These visits should be kept as short as possible.
- b. Visits to the columbaria and other permitted religious activities (excluding 7<sup>th</sup> month prayer and other worship services) can take place concurrently at the place of worship subject to **a total cap of 50 persons** (excluding religious and supporting workers), and only if these activities can be conducted safely at separate locations within the place of worship. There must be adequate signs and directions to guide the different parties such that they do not interact or meet each other while entering, exiting or while in the premises.

7. Dinners and Getais. **Dinners, in-person getais, live music and live auctioning are not permitted** for this year's 7<sup>th</sup> lunar month activities. ROs can consider alternative forms such as digital recordings that allow their worshippers to safely participate in such activities.<sup>5</sup>

## **MANDATORY SUBMISSION OF SAFE MANAGEMENT PLANS**

8. ROs must have submitted their SMPs for Phase Two **at least 3 days** before proceeding with any activity as part of 7<sup>th</sup> lunar month. ROs requesting deviations from the parameters set out in either MCCY's prevailing advisory on the Resumption of More Religious Activities in Phase Two, or the guidelines set out above from paragraphs 3 to 7, will require MCCY's approval before proceeding with their activities.

9. MCCY reserves the right to suspend a RO's activities if there are gaps in the SMP submitted and until the necessary rectifications are made. Should there be any confirmed COVID-19 cases linked to a RO's 7<sup>th</sup> lunar month activities, the RO's operations and/or premises may be closed for a period of time as determined by the authorities.

## **WORKING TOGETHER TO KEEP SINGAPORE COVID-SAFE**

10. MCCY will continue to work with our ROs to ensure a COVID-safe environment for religious activities. We also seek the understanding and support of our religious communities to abide by the safe management measures.

## **MINISTRY OF CULTURE, COMMUNITY AND YOUTH**

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For more information and FAQs on COVID-19 for the religious sector, please visit [www.cpro.gov.sg](http://www.cpro.gov.sg) or contact MCCY's Crisis Preparedness for Religious Organisations Programme Office at [cpro@mccy.gov.sg](mailto:cpro@mccy.gov.sg).

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<sup>5</sup> These are subject to prevailing guidelines on broadcasting and recording services in MCCY's advisory on the Resumption of More Religious Activities in Phase Two updated on 2 Aug 2020.