

GRADUAL RESUMPTION OF RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

On 19 May 2020, the Multi-Ministry Taskforce announced a phased approach to resuming activities safely from 2 Jun 2020. This advisory provides guidance to religious organisations (ROs) on the phased approach for the resumption of religious activities.

Phase One: Safe Re-opening

2. During the Circuit Breaker from 7 Apr to 1 Jun 2020, all places of worship are closed to the public, except for the conduct of funeral rites and the installation of niches, involving no more than 10 persons on each occasion.

3. **From 2 Jun 2020, places of worship may re-open for private worship¹.**

- a. **Worshippers may only pray individually or together if they are members of the same household.** There can be up to 5 members of the same household praying together at any one time in the place of worship.
- b. **We will allow up to 5 households for private worship in the place of worship at any one time**, subject to adequate safe distancing measures put in place. This limit is imposed because in Phase One of our resumption of activities, people should continue to limit their contact with others outside their households.
- c. To minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission, there must be **no physical interaction between worshippers from different households**. Safe distancing must be maintained between the worshippers and religious workers in the place of worship at all times. Worshippers must also minimise their time in the place of worship, and not engage in other religious activities on-site.
- d. Private worship refers only to prayers and other forms of worship that are performed by an individual worshipper alone or with his/her household group. **Religious rites and ceremonies performed by religious workers are strictly not allowed except for marriage solemnizations and funeral-related activities** (see paragraph 4).

¹ Places of worship that are located in residential units must remain closed to external visitors. These are subject to the prevailing restrictions on homes and households, where visits and inter-mingling of households are not allowed except for visits to parents or grandparents staying elsewhere in Phase One.

- e. Places of worship may **deploy religious workers and staff to facilitate private worship and other permitted activities**, but this group must be limited to essential tasks and kept to a minimum number.
- f. Places of worship must put in place **safe management measures** (see Annex) to protect worshippers, religious workers and staff. These include designating prayer areas; no sharing of prayer items; ensuring no queues of worshippers outside the premises; safe distancing among worshippers, religious workers and staff; sanitising the prayer area after each use; and one-way flow for entry and exit points.

4. As we will be resuming in-person marriage solemnizations in Phase One, **places of worship may open for the conduct of marriage solemnizations as well as continue to conduct wakes and funerals. Families may continue to install niches for their loved ones in columbariums in places of worship**, which will otherwise remain closed to visitors.

- a. In-person marriage solemnizations can involve up to 10 persons (excluding solemnizer), who are immediate family members of the couple with the exception of the two witnesses who may be non-family members. Nevertheless, we encourage couples to consider the alternative of marriage solemnizations via video link, so as to better protect themselves and their loved ones from the risk of infection.
- b. Wakes, funeral rites and the installation of niches can continue to involve up to 10 persons at any one time (excluding religious and supporting workers, which must be kept to a minimum).
- c. Those who attend marriage solemnizations and funeral-related activities must minimise their interaction with fellow attendees, and must leave the place of worship immediately after the event. There should not be any post-event reception with food and drinks.

5. **In-person congregational worship services, religious classes and cell group meetings also remain suspended in Phase One**, as these involve interaction of individuals who are not of the same household.

6. **ROs should continue to support the religious needs of their communities via remote means such as recording and broadcast of religious services and prayers.**

- a. There should be **no more than 5 persons on-site** at a time for the digital production of these services. Time spent on-site for this purpose must be kept as short as possible. ROs may return on-site for these activities as and when required but we encourage ROs to plan their production schedule as everyone must continue to limit their movements outside

their homes and interactions with non-household members. The production team must abide by the guidelines in this advisory and put in place adequate safe management measures.

- b. **Live singing for the recording of religious services and prayers is strongly discouraged** as singing releases a larger amount of droplets, which will increase the risk of COVID-19 transmission. ROs that wish to conduct live singing must first demonstrate how they would do so safely² in the safe management plans for MCCY's review before they can proceed (see paragraphs 10 and 11).

7. Permitted activities (i.e. private worship, marriage solemnizations, funeral-related activities and recording/broadcast sessions) may take place concurrently at the place of worship, only if they can be conducted safely at separate locations within the place of worship. There must be sufficient 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.

8. All other workplace activities at the ROs' premises remain suspended. All religious workers and staff not involved in the permitted on-site activities must continue to telecommute. **For the permitted activities, the on-site religious workers and staff must be kept to a minimum and comply with prevailing safe management measures at the workplace** stipulated by the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) and the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI).

9. If religious workers or staff need to return to the ROs' premises or place of worship for any *other* activity than those permitted in paragraphs 3, 4 and 6, ROs must apply to MTI for a Time-Limited Exemption (TLE) via <https://covid.gobusiness.gov.sg> one day prior to the conduct of such activities. **ROs are not required to inform MCCY of these TLE applications.** These TLEs will be capped at twice per week for each RO (by unique entity number). If additional TLEs are required, ROs can appeal to MCCY via cpro@mccy.gov.sg and these will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Submission of Safe Management Plans

10. As we gradually re-open places of worship, ROs must develop and implement a plan to protect their worshippers as well as religious workers and staff. All ROs must put in place safe management measures (see Annex) before re-opening their places of worship for permitted activities in Phase One. **ROs must submit their Safe Management Plans, including manpower deployment, to MCCY within two weeks of re-opening their place of worship and commencing the permitted activities.** The detailed requirements and format for submitting these plans will be made available at www.cpro.gov.sg from 27 May 2020.

² For example, the singer is alone in a separate room in the place of the worship from the rest of the recording team; singing is recorded on a different day from the rest of the accompanying music and the recordings are then combined.

11. The Safe Management Plans will be reviewed for the adequacy of the measures to ensure a safe environment for worshippers, religious workers and staff with the resumption of religious activities. Should the plans be deemed inadequate, MCCY reserves the right to suspend the ROs' activities until the necessary rectifications are made. Should there be any confirmed COVID-19 cases linked to a RO's premises or place of worship, the entire premises will be closed for a period of time determined by the authorities if there are public health grounds to do so.

Working Together to Make Singapore COVID-safe

12. The Multi-Ministry Taskforce will ensure that we move into Phase Two ("Safe Transition") only when community transmission of COVID-19 remains low.

13. Depending on the COVID-19 situation and our risk assessment, measures in Phase Two will be eased gradually until we reach a new normal in Phase Three ("Safe Nation"), which we expect to remain at until an effective vaccine or treatment for COVID-19 is developed. By this time, we expect most religious activities to have resumed, with limits to gathering sizes to prevent large clusters from arising.

14. MCCY will issue further advisories to guide ROs on the relevant measures in the subsequent phases. In preparation for these, MCCY will engage ROs on their safe management plans for more religious activities. The progressive resumption of religious activities is possible only if we work together to ensure we minimise risk, and protect our worshippers, religious workers and staff.

15. The road ahead to a new COVID-safe environment is long. But with religious communities playing their part and staying united, we can overcome this challenge and emerge stronger. **#SGUnited**

MINISTRY OF CULTURE, COMMUNITY AND YOUTH

25 May 2020

For more information and FAQs on COVID-19 for the religious sector, please visit www.cpro.gov.sg or contact MCCY's Community Relations and Engagement Division at cpro@mccy.gov.sg

Mandatory Safe Management Measures for Religious Activities

(Refer to www.cpro.gov.sg for the detailed requirements of the safe management plan)

<p>Step 1: Implement a Safe Management System</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Set up a detailed monitoring plan to ensure Steps 2-6 are maintained and resolve issues in a timely manner b. Appoint at least one Safe Management Officer to assist in the implementation, coordination and monitoring of the system of Safe Management Measures in the RO's premises and/or place of worship 	<p>Step 2: Minimise physical interaction, ensure safe distancing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Religious workers and staff should telecommute as a default b. No activities with prolonged contact c. Keep at least 1m safe distance at all times d. Minimise and regulate footfall at public places, including designating prayer areas, ensuring that there are no queues and a one-way flow for entry and exit points e. Remove shared prayer items; worshippers to bring their own f. Limit team for recording/broadcast sessions to 5 persons g. Limit the number of essential religious workers and staff returning for permitted duties h. Minimise social interaction between attendees at marriage solemnizations and funeral-related activities i. Avoid physical greetings and contact, adopt alternatives to shaking hands
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<p>Step 3: Support contact tracing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Use <i>SafeEntry</i> to record entry and exit b. Encourage all persons, including religious workers, staff and visitors, to download and activate <i>TraceTogether</i> 	<p>Step 4: Wear masks/face shields and observe good personal hygiene</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. All persons, including religious workers, staff and visitors, must wear masks or face shields b. Remind attendees to practise good personal hygiene (e.g. wash hands regularly) 	<p>Step 5: Ensure on-site cleanliness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Frequent cleaning and sanitisation of premises, including common areas and high-contact surfaces and improve ventilation b. Provide hand soap at all hand-wash stations and hand sanitiser at all common touchpoints (e.g. entrances and lift lobbies) 	<p>Step 6: Implement health checks and protocols to manage potential infection cases</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Administer temperature screening and health/travel declarations of attendees b. Turn away those who are unwell, have traveled overseas in the last 14 days or who are serving home quarantine or stay-home notice c. Have an evacuation plan for unwell/suspected cases and all others in the premises <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. If there is a confirmed case, immediately vacate and cordon off the affected area ii. Thoroughly clean and disinfect all exposed surfaces
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