

ELEVATED SAFE DISTANCING MEASURES FOR RELIGIOUS ORGANISATIONS

On 3 Apr 2020, MOH announced elevated safe distancing measures to minimise local transmission of COVID-19. These measures will be in effect from 7 Apr 2020 until 4 May 2020. This advisory provides guidance to religious leaders on the implementation of these measures for religious organisations.

Further Restrictions on Faith-based Activities

2. From 26 Mar 2020, religious organisations were to suspend all congregational worship and religious services, while places of worship could remain open for private worship and some rites¹ for not more than 10 persons at any one time.

3. From **7 Apr 2020 to 4 May 2020 (inclusive)**, religious organisations are to implement additional safe distancing measures:

- a. All religious services will remain suspended and **all places of worship will be closed to the public.**
- b. Columbariums in places of worship will be closed to visitors. Families may continue to install niches for their loved ones in private ceremonies involving not more than 10 persons *and* with the precautionary measures listed in the Annex.
- c. **Where necessary, places of worship may continue to conduct funeral rites.** Funerals and wakes should involve no more than 10 persons at any one time (excluding religious and other supporting workers, which must be kept to a minimum) *and* comply with the precautionary measures listed in the Annex.
- d. All other religious activities² that were previously subject to no more than 10 persons, will now be fully suspended.
- e. Activities at workplace premises should also be suspended. Religious organisations must have their employees/religious workers work from home (i.e. telecommute), if they wish to continue their operations.

4. Some religious organisations may wish to explore alternative means to support the religious needs of their communities such as live streaming, podcasts and online ancestral praying. If so, the activities and the people involved in implementing these

¹ Weddings, funerals and wakes.

² E.g. religious classes, cell group gatherings, prayer meetings

alternatives must be kept to only what is essential (e.g. filming a sermon only without a worship team or band), and for as short a duration as possible. Precautionary measures must also be taken (see Annex).

5. During this period, religious leaders are to strongly advise their followers **not to hold religious gatherings³ in private settings, except with family members in the same household**. This is to minimise movement and interactions of people in public and private places, and for people to stay home as much as possible.

Full Implementation of Measures

6. **Religious organisations are to fully implement these safe distancing measures as soon as possible and no later than 7 Apr 2020**. Persons and organisations that do not comply will face stiff penalties under the Infectious Diseases Act.⁴

Social Responsibility is Critical

7. We understand that these additional measures can be disruptive to religious life but they are necessary to slow the spread of COVID-19, and protect Singaporeans. We encourage religious leaders to advise their communities to **Stay Home (to) Stay Safe**, during this critical period. Through our collective efforts, we can keep Singapore safe from COVID-19.

MINISTRY OF CULTURE, COMMUNITY AND YOUTH
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For queries, please contact MCCY's Community Relations and Engagement Division at cpro@mccy.gov.sg

³ E.g. communal prayers, cell group meetings, religious classes

⁴ Offenders will face a fine of less than \$10,000 or imprisonment of less than 6 months or both. In addition, existing levers under the Infectious Diseases Act, including the temporary suspension of operations, may be used against errant persons and operators.

Precautionary Measures for Religious Activities
(non-exhaustive list)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Register attendees to facilitate contact tracing • Administer temperature screening and health/travel declarations of attendees • Turn away those who are unwell, have travelled overseas in the last 14 days, or who are serving home quarantine or stay-home notice • Frequent cleaning and sanitisation of premises, including common areas and high-contact surfaces and improve ventilation • Remind attendees to practise good personal hygiene and be socially responsible – wash hands regularly, avoid touching their faces, avoid greetings with physical contact, and stay home if unwell • Advise elderly against attending wakes 	<p>Reduce Density</p> <p><i>The closer the physical contact between individuals, the higher the likelihood of transmission</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 1m separation between attendees, family members • Limit support team for live streaming duties to a minimum and for essential services only
	<p>Lower Intensity</p> <p><i>The more vigorous the activity (e.g. singing), the greater the degree of release of droplets</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No singing, use pre-recorded tracks instead • Minimise social interaction between attendees at wakes • Avoid physical greetings and contact, alternatives to shaking hands
	<p>Shorten Duration</p> <p><i>The longer the exposure to others, the higher the likelihood of transmission</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shorten live streaming of services • Advise attendees, team members to leave wakes and live streaming sessions immediately after